



THE WEST AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS STORYBOOK



CELEBRATING & SHARING
GOOD NEWS STORIES



The Gascoyne Edition





This work is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part may be reproduced by any process without prior written permission from PHAIWA.

To obtain further copies of this publication you can contact the following:

PHAIWA
GPO Box U1987
Perth WA 6845
Website: www.phaiwa.org.au
Email: phaiwa@curtin.edu.au

Note the document can be electronically accessed from:

www.phaiwa.org.au

Edition No.6

ISBN number: 978-0-9924807-3-8

© May 2015 Public Health Advocacy Institute WA-Publication Design by Makomedia, Fremantle WA

Acknowledgements

PHAIWA would like to thank Healthway for their support, confidence and financial contributions towards the development of the Indigenous Storybook series.

This Storybook would not have been possible without the support from our Advisory Committee who oversee the concept.

Special thanks to:

- Ray Christophers
- Lyn Dimer
- Juli Coffin
- Dave Pigram

Finally, PHAIWA would like to sincerely thank all the storytellers who contributed their experiences and stories. Special thanks to Sunni Wilson and Melissa Stoneham from PHAIWA for providing the coordination roles. Special thanks also to Louella Monaghan for her contribution to this edition.

Cover Photo - Photo Credit Sunni Wilson

This photo was taken at Big Lagoon in the Shark Bay region. This site is culturally significant for Aboriginal people because it is an area where people camped for thousands of years. This traditional site was used so extensively because it contained many fresh water wells and an abundance of both seafood and kangaroos which were two of the main sources of food for people.

Introduction2

About the Gascoyne Region.....3



STORIES

1. The Mooka Project.....4

2. Janine's Story - Sharing Culture through Dance8

3. The Carnarvon Community Men's Group..... 12

4. YO! - Carnarvon Youth Outreach Service..... 15

5. DIGS - Drop In Girls' Space..... 19

6. John Oxenham - The Inspiring Story of a Community Leader.....23

7. The Mungullah Clean Up.....26

8. Ada Fossa, Tales from the Bay30

9. Wula Guda Nyinda Eco Adventures.....33

10. Jimmy Poland - Memories of Shark Bay38

11. Yadgalah - The Onesie Club.....41

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the sixth edition of the WA Indigenous Storybook which focuses on the Gascoyne region and includes stories from Carnarvon and the beautiful Shark Bay region.

As always, the aim of this Storybook is to celebrate Indigenous people and those who have contributed to the social, economic, health and environmental outcomes for their communities. Each story showcases the achievements of individuals, organisations and communities across the Gascoyne region.

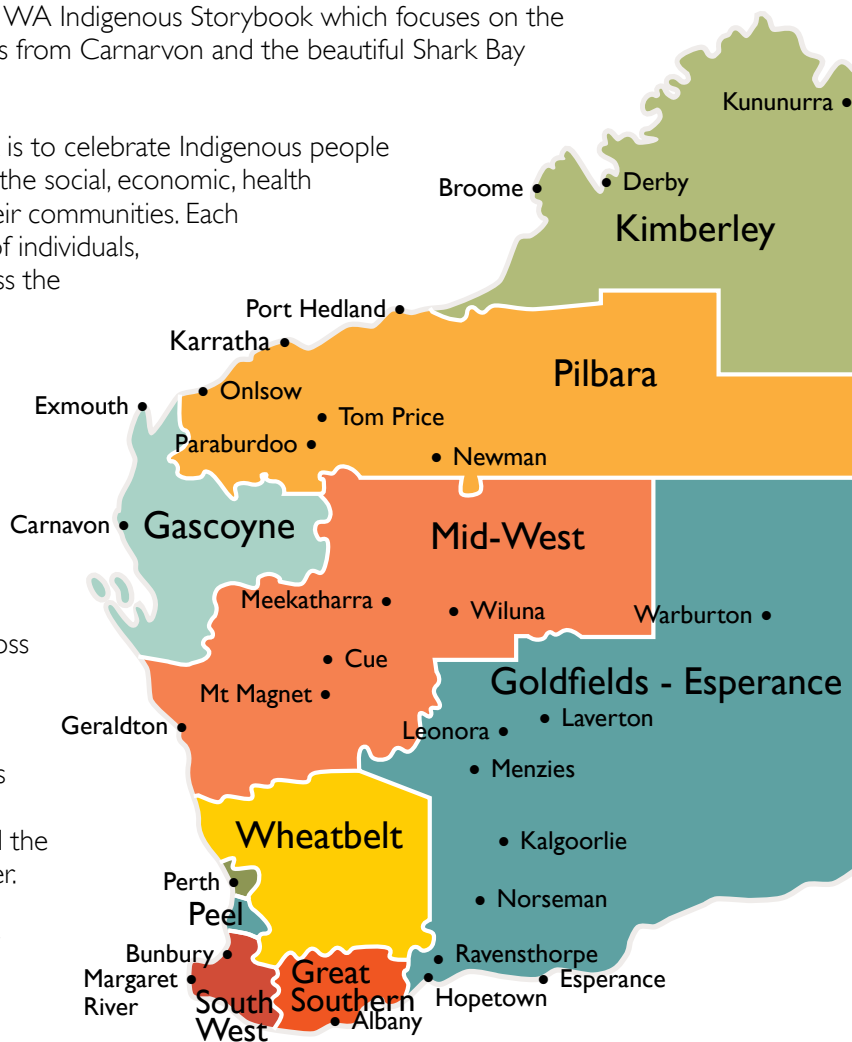
This Storybook celebrates the publication of our 80th story. PHAIWA and Healthway are very proud to be associated with the dissemination of so many positive and inspiring stories that describe how health and wellbeing is being promoted through Aboriginal communities across this state, including rural and remote locations.

An evaluation of the five Storybooks we have published to date, has indicated that communities have had the opportunity to learn from each other. Many have told us they share what has worked and not worked in their communities and encourage others to replicate particular projects or strategies in other communities.

Organisations have told us they have had the opportunity to offer support (through experience and knowledge) to similar organisations and communities. Storytellers have told us that through sharing their stories, the experience has provided other communities with ideas and tangible proven methods to work with. The Storybooks have also provided an opportunity to enhance communication between Aboriginal communities and organisations, and highlighted some of the strengths in communities, empowering them to move forward in positive ways.

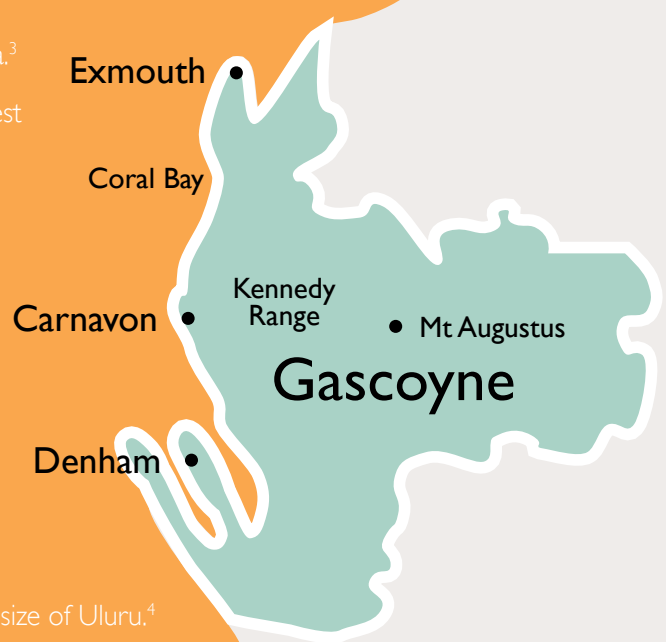
This edition is no different. The stories in this book all describe positive initiatives and illustrate how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and projects really are making a difference to the lives of the people in their communities. In this edition, we feature stories that describe services, education facilities, art, environmental stewardship, healthy communities and local champions.

The next Storybook will return to the Perth region. PHAIWA welcomes all stories that focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues – whether these are individual stories or those that have affected whole communities. If you would like to contribute your story please contact PHAIWA at www.phaiwa.org.au



ABOUT THE GASCOYNE REGION

- The Gascoyne covers about 138,000km² and is roughly one and a half times the size of Tasmania.³
- It has about 600km of coastline and has the lowest population density of any region in Australia.³
- Carnarvon, Coral Bay, Exmouth and Gascoyne Junction are the major towns of the region.²
- Ningaloo reef is one of the main tourist attractions of the Gascoyne. The coral reef stretches over 260 kilometres along the coast of the Indian Ocean.²
- Carnarvon hosts a large satellite, known as the 'big dish', which was an integral part of the communications network for the Apollo Moon Programme.¹
- Mount Augustus is a granite formation twice the size of Uluru.⁴
- Tourism makes the greatest financial contribution to the Gascoyne. Visitor numbers have increased to above 200,000 per year.³
- Fishing and agriculture provide the most jobs (16.7%). Both sectors produce more than the State average per head of population.³
- The major industries in the region are tourism, retail, horticulture, mining (salt, gypsum, oil and gas), fishing, and pastoralism.³
- The Gascoyne has an average of 320 days per year of sunshine.²
- There are a range of Aboriginal groups whose traditional country is the Gascoyne. These include the Baiyungu, Budina, Inggarda, Malgana, Thalanyji, Thudgari, and Wajarri peoples.
- Yamaji (or Yamatji) is the collective name for Aboriginal people, country, and region of the Murchison and Gascoyne area.⁶
- Over 17 per cent of residents are Indigenous, with the majority (58%) living in the Shire of Upper Gascoyne.⁵
- 44% of the Indigenous population is aged 19 or under.³



References

1. <http://www.carnarvon.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Carnarvon-Coral-Bay-Holiday-Planner-2015.pdf>
2. <http://www.migration.wa.gov.au/living-in-western-australia/regional-western-australia/gascoyne/major-towns-and-cities>
3. <http://www.rdamwg.com.au/the-mid-west-gascoyne.html>
4. <http://www.ga.gov.au/scientific-topics/geographic-information/landforms/significant-rock-features>
5. http://docs.employment.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/resj_western_australia_mid_west_gascoyne.pdf
6. <http://www.planning.wa.gov.au/>

THE MOOKA PROJECT

ORGANISATION NAME:

Gwoonwaru Gnarlu
(Mungullah Woman's Group)

CONTACT PERSON:

Patrick Parrelli

EMAIL AND WEBSITE:

www.kadadjiny.com or p.parrelli@kadadjiny.com

PROGRAM / PROJECT PARTNERS:

Mungullah Aboriginal Community, Kadadjiny, WA Department of Culture and Arts, Carnarvon Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation, and Toni Roe from Jillinbiri Weavers (another well reputed local Aboriginal artistic group)

KEY STAFF/PEOPLE INVOLVED:

Patrick Parrelli, Karen Ryan

KEY WORDS:

Semi-precious stone jewellery using Mookaite stone from Kennedy Ranges, Ingarra region. Strong cultural significance to traditional people of this region



This story was told by Patrick Parrelli and Karen Ryan with information sourced from: <http://kadadjiny.com/>

Once upon a time...

in March 2013, the team at Kadadjiny identified an opportunity for Aboriginal people living within the Ingaarda region of the Gascoyne, WA, who may be interested in jewellery design and manufacturing using a semi-precious stone named Mookaite. The Mookaite stone are exclusively located at Mooka Creek, in the Kennedy Ranges in the Gascoyne, and nowhere else in the world. This led to a consultation with Traditional Owners and community artists in Mungullah Aboriginal Community, situated in the remote town of Carnarvon in Western Australia, 913

About the storytellers...

Karen Ryan has resided in Mungullah Aboriginal Community for over 30 years since it was relocated after the floods in 1980. She was originally born in Meekatharra, Western Australia and is a Wajarri woman from the Murchison region. She spent her youth and adult years in the community always contributing as a community worker and undertaking many visual arts projects in the past.

Patrick Parrelli is a Project Officer of Kadadjiny, and is also the Youth Project Officer at Carnarvon Aboriginal Medical Service.

About The Mooka Project...

The Mooka Project is a set of skills and creativity development workshops for existing and currently participating jewellery artists in Mungullah, primarily using the semi-precious stone Mookaite from Mooka Creek, in the Kennedy Ranges 150km east of Carnarvon, within the Ingaarda region. The goal of the Mooka Project is to provide the artists with a platform to strive for artistic excellence by increasing their capacity and developing new skills in lapidary, silver-smithing, leather braiding and weaving.

km's from Perth. The idea was put to the people in the community and the Mungullah Woman's Group, Gwoonwaru Gnarlu, in particular, were really keen to be involved.

The team at Kadadjiny visited Mungullah again in June 2013, and the first jewellery making workshops began with around 50 community participants. Kadadjiny continued returning to Mungullah every two months to deliver weekly training workshops to further develop the artists' skills. During this period, a core group of 10 Aboriginal participants emerged. In December 2013, after testing the engagement and viability, Kadadjiny, on behalf of Gwoonwaru Gnarlu Mungullah Woman's Group, sourced funding from the WA Department of Culture and Art-which was successful.



The girls grinding the rocks

And then one day...

enter The Mooka Project. The Mooka Project is a set of skills and creativity development workshops based over six weeks for participating jewellery artists in Mungullah, primarily using the semi-precious stone Mookaite.

The goal of the Mooka Project is to provide artists with a platform to strive for artistic excellence by increasing their capacity and developing their skills in lapidary, silver-smithing, leather braiding and weaving. In February 2014, the team at Kadadjiny in collaboration with the men from the community, refit an old burnt out workshop shed and turned it into a multi-purpose art centre. The centre would also be used to host the jewellery making workshops. This was a fantastic community effort, which resulted in a customised space to suit the community's purposes.

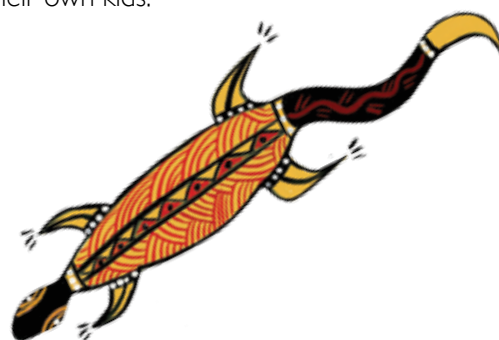
Since July 2014, we have been focused on training and facilitating the workshops. The workshops are comprised of delivering different skills including weaving, leather works and silver craft. This project has several objectives; to cultivate and expand the skill base of emerging Mungullah artists; to design and manufacture high quality, unique, handmade semi-precious gemstone jewellery (which is ancient in design, affordable and versatile); to train people in all aspects of jewellery design and production; to provide people with direction and focus, and lastly, to get people back onto Country.

And because of that...

we are currently focused on training and development. Once this project hits the next level where we have trained a core group of people who are confident with their designs, then we can look at exhibiting and selling our jewellery. There are clear benefits for individual artists and the community as a whole. The use of Mookaite has the potential to be a sustainable industry, with a creative focus. It also enables a reinvigoration of cultural connections to Country. It doesn't just provide benefits and creative skills development; it also provides the means for individuals and the community to flourish and to further forge an identity linked to artistry.

This project is considered sacred to the Aboriginal people in the region because it encourages the expression of their traditional culture in a contemporary form. It also supports the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people within Mungullah through the artistic exercise and medium.

The ultimate goal is to preserve and promote Aboriginal culture locally, nationally and internationally. We have been targeting some of the younger women (16-24 years) in the community to encourage them to spend time with their Elders on Country. It is in this environment that they can hear the stories of the old people before they pass away, so they can share those stories and traditional knowledge and history with their own kids.



"This project helps to share and maintain our culture by getting people back on Country so stories can be handed down, like the next generation coming from the Country can get the hang of this too and keep it. It will be a good thing to give back to the Country."



Mookaite stone



Mookaite stone

And since that day...

this project is going from strength to strength. Our main aim is to build this business up to a point where the artists are self-sufficient and running their own sustainable business, with Kadadjiny focused on marketing the products nationally and internationally, and seeking further opportunities for participants.

We are now in the process of organising an exhibition with the local cultural centre Gwoonwarda Mia in Carnarvon and our bigger goal is to exhibit at the Revealed Exhibition in March 2017 in Perth. Revealed is an exhibition which showcases new and emerging Indigenous artists from Western Australia. We would also like to develop enough products to exhibit our work at exhibitions in Melbourne and Sydney in the near future. There is also a long term plan in place to collaborate with designers in the US, specifically New York- with the aim to promote Aboriginal culture and stories to an international market.

This is an exciting project for the woman of Mungullah and the benefits involved are immeasurable. We are moving forward to develop a viable business model that will provide employment and strong possibilities to nourish contemporary Aboriginal art, unique to the Gascoyne and derived from traditional ideas, and culture.



Karen and Toni weaving





Mookaite merchandise



Turquoise set

For more information
and to view the
jewellery please visit:
<http://kadadjiny.com/>

Written by Karen Ryan

I got involved in this project because I am a creative person and I used to do Indigenous art before and I enjoy being creative with carving and jewellery. This project helps to share and maintain our culture by getting people back on Country so stories can be handed down, like the next generation coming from the Country can get the hang of this too and keep it. It will be a good thing to give back to the Country. I enjoy making jewellery because it's calming and inspires me to do more and down the track I can see this business getting bigger. I'd like to see this expand to set up our own business, have art exhibitions and sell our work. It's important to keep this project going because it is the only business like this in this part of the region so hopefully it will make a name for Carnarvon, and for me. I was given the opportunity to do this and stick with it, and we have come a long way, so hopefully this will work and go places so we can carry it on for the next generation and make a name for Mungullah.

JANINE'S STORY - SHARING CULTURE THROUGH DANCE

CONTACT PERSON:

Janine Oxenham

EMAIL AND WEBSITE:

neen_jj@yahoo.com.au

<https://www.facebook.com/public/Gascoyne-Circus>

KEY WORDS:

Dance, movement, expression, culture, identity, arts, circus, youth

About the storyteller...

Janine is an Indigenous woman who was born and bred in Carnarvon. She has studied dance at both the National Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Association's dance college in New South Wales and at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts in Perth. She facilitates an adult and a youth contemporary Aboriginal and hip hop styled dance group that performs alongside the Civic Centre Circus to weave story and contemporary Aboriginal themes through the shows. Janine is also a capable poi spinner and performs fire poi routines as part of the Civic Centre Circus. She exhibits fast, fluid and creative interchanges between each of her tricks.



All photos taken by Anton Blume

Once upon a time...

Janine, who is a Malgana woman, was born in 1977, in the remote North-West town of Carnarvon famous for its banana plantations. She was fortunate to grow up on a fruit and vegetable plantation, which her family moved onto when Janine was just three months old. She had a lot of freedom on the plantation with her two brothers and sister and had a pretty happy, adventurous childhood; they got to go swimming down the Gascoyne River, fishing and hanging out at the beach as well as helping their parents with plantation work. Kids on the plantations in Carnarvon had a very different childhood to many of the kids in town. Growing up in town, it was a lot easier to walk around the streets at night and get into a bit of mischief but for plantation kids, that wasn't an

Janine Oxenham, Marama Thompson, Michael Torossi as part of the Gascoyne in May crew at the Whaleshark Festival in Exmouth

option. They were busy riding motorbikes, learning to drive cars and running around the plantation. Janine's mum and dad worked really hard running their plantation, which meant they worked a lot of weekends. As the kids got older they worked on the plantation too. Working on the plantation and getting part time jobs after school definitely provided the kids with a good, strong work ethic that the four of them have taken into their adulthood. Janine was an active kid and during her primary school



years, developed a love of dancing. She danced at school whenever the opportunity arose; but those opportunities were limited. She attended Carnarvon Senior High School and when she finished in 1994, decided to venture a little further from home and travelled to Sydney and throughout regional NSW. This adventure was the first time Janine had left home so it was a real eye opener and an important time of growth. After several months she returned to Carnarvon and started working at the local radio station as a receptionist.

However, she was not destined to stay in Carnarvon for long as one particular day, two dancers from a Sydney dance college called the National Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Association (NAISDA) spoke on air about their program for young Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander dancers which perked her interest immensely. Janine auditioned in Carnarvon and was accepted into the program and found herself heading east to Sydney, this time with only \$300 to her name. She thought she'd jump in and give it a shot, if it didn't work out she'd simply come home. Unfortunately, Abstudy wasn't an option because her mum and dad owned their own business and had assets, so financially she was on her own. However, as fate would have it, Janine got chatting to the guy she was seated next to on the plane and it turned out he owned a pub in North Sydney and he offered her a job behind the bar.

And then one day...

a new chapter began. Janine was dancing everyday at NAISDA, which was located in a hanger under the Sydney Harbour Bridge; the dance studio was an incredible big arched space with the domed ceiling high overhead. On the weekends she would head over to North Sydney to work in the bar; this was an awkward time for her as she felt like a little black duck out of water in the up market establishment, but she was grateful for the opportunity to be able to support herself. Janine lived in Sydney for four years while she trained at NAISDA.

Being immersed in a world where Indigenous people showcased their pride in their culture and pride in being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander through dance, was invigorating.

"I think it's so important in a town such as ours where the concept of 'shame' is such a big factor in Aboriginal peoples' lives, to encourage younger people to try to overcome this 'shame'."





Kaelee Mallard, Janine Oxenham, Bianca Whitby



“Cultural identity is such a big talking point in Carnarvon at the moment, because we know that our young people are the next generation and we need them to be positive and proud of what it is to be Yamatji.”

There were about 30 to 40 dancers and they were taught mostly traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island dancing as well as Indigenous contemporary dance, ballet and jazz. It was a really wonderful, life changing, personal growth experience for Janine and easily some of the best years of her life. A lot of the dancers from that period still live in Sydney, and many went onto join Bangarra Dance Theatre (Australia's leading Indigenous performing arts company).

The friendships developed during that time were so special that Janine made brothers and sisters for life. After four fantastic years in Sydney, she headed home to have her first daughter. After a while though, her urge to dance kicked in again so she decided to audition for the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) in Perth which she was accepted into. So once again she was on the move, this time with her beautiful three year old daughter. It was a gruelling year but a wonderful one and although she wanted to complete the course, financially it just became untenable. Janine met her partner around this period and decided to go and visit him in his hometown of Germany. That short visit turned into a four year stint of living and working in Germany which was another fun adventure but also challenging at times being so far from family, home and her countrymen and women.

And because of that...

three and a half years ago, she came home determined to get involved in her community again. She met a woman called Theaker von Ziarno who was teaching circus skills to the young kids in town. Theaker is an international aerial artist, rigger, and producer of art, circus and festival. She pioneered

solo aerial street performance and founded Gascoyne Circus and Physical Theatre which is a performance group and a circus school that trains and teaches circus skills. Being a dancer, circus performing seemed like a natural progression for Janine and she was keen to get involved. Theaker taught her some basic circus skills so she could co-teach the kids and now, alongside three others, Janine teaches circus skills and produces community events throughout the region. The group tries to showcase as much of Carnarvon as they can in their performances. They invite people to sing, recite poetry, dance, or perform circus skills. It's a particularly excellent opportunity for the circus kids to perform for their families and showcase their aerial, silks and trapeze skills. They love dancing and doing the circus skills, they are all natural climbers and love to shimmy up a silk or a rope and down again.

The community performs an annual show called 'Imaginations Run Wild' in November, in which many children come together to celebrate the skills they have learnt throughout the year. Working with the circus kick-started Janine's creativity and in October 2011, she formed the Pundara Performance Group with two other local friends, Candice Dia and Bianca Whitby. The group started predominately as a youth group but has since developed into an adult group as well; they have been performing at events and openings, during NAIDOC week, and at most of the festivals of Gascoyne in May. As there is limited Indigenous dance performances in the region, people are drawn to it and audiences have been really receptive which is fantastic. One of the initial performances of the Pundara Performance Group was at Gascoyne in May, which is an annual festival that takes place in our region.

Gascoyne in May is five festivals in four weeks across a journey of 2700 km's. There is Barefoot Black Tie in Shark Bay; Burringurrah Festival of Fire about 500 km's inland at the Aboriginal community in Mount Augustus; Gascoyne Junction's River Music Festival; TropiCOOL Festival here in Carnarvon and finally, Ningaloo Whale Shark Festival in Exmouth-all in the month of May. Each festival reflects its individual locations and shares local culture. There is now a Gascoyne in May crew, comprised of several Carnarvon locals, who organise lighting, music and sound for the five festivals.

The circus crew also perform their own special show at each festival, which includes fire twirling, silks, trapeze, acrobatics, and stilt walking. The Gascoyne Region is privileged to have many talented national and international artists performing at Gascoyne in May. Although Carnarvon is remote, we are privileged to have artists from all over Australia visit our region. We get to meet some phenomenal people and develop personal connections.

And since that day...

Janine is now involved with performing in two different capacities, dancing with Pundara Performance Group and performing with the Civic Centre Circus and she loves being involved on both levels. Living in a small town, it's important to create avenues to follow your passion and in Janine's case, provide opportunities for the local kids, particularly something creative, physically challenging and fun! Dancing has always been a big part of Indigenous culture and teaching Indigenous contemporary dancing helps the kids to identify and connect with their culture. An important part of Pundara is talking about culture with the youth and when they travel to different places they ensure that they are welcomed or welcome themselves to that particular Country and introduce themselves to the spirits of that land.

The group are very vocal about how special and significant this is. The kids have their own stories to share and express as well and Pundara tries to include their stories in the dance performances as much as they can. For example, if the kids want to bring in a movement, an emotion, a feeling or do something that is culturally or personally significant to them, they are wholeheartedly supported and encouraged. Pundara Performance Group encourages the kids to feel comfortable in their own skin and connected to their culture and identity. Ultimately Janine knows how hard it is, one living in a small

town, and two being an Indigenous person and the duality of living in mainstream society but also staying connected to who you are and where you come from. Cultural identity is such a big talking point in Carnarvon at the moment, because the young people are the next generation and they need to be positive and proud of what it is to be Yamatji.

Janine was recently commissioned by Ausdance WA to create and direct a dance performance in Carnarvon in 2015. The work will be part of the organisation's Future Landings program. This is a state-wide program aimed to support regional dance artists to produce contemporary dance performances with and for their community. She is currently in the process of finalising a concept for the work, and will begin delivering workshops to the community in March 2015 to produce the content. Janine is really excited about the project and believes it will be a great opportunity for her own personal development.

This project is grass roots at the moment and Janine is hoping the wider community gets on board and is keen to participate. It is Janine's hope that the community gets involved in this performance in any capacity that suits them-on stage performing or backstage doing lightning, props, makeup or costuming. There are so many parts of a production and not everybody has had the opportunity to experience the magic of putting on a show or dancing for an audience and Janine really wants to share this love and experience with her wider community.



"It was an incredibly nurturing organisation and the staff really looked after us Indigenous kids who had come from all over Australia to train as dancers. We were so fortunate to travel to communities and learn their songs, dances and traditions."

THE CARNARVON COMMUNITY MEN'S GROUP

ORGANISATION NAME:

The Carnarvon Community Men's Group

CONTACT PERSON:

Jalba Dann

EMAIL AND WEBSITE:

jalbadann.pcy.com;
carnarvonmensgroup@hotmail.com

PROGRAM / PROJECT PARTNERS:

The PCYC, Rio Tinto, The Carnarvon Shire Council, The Department of Sport and Recreation, Youth Justice Service, The Department for Child Protection and Family Support, Aboriginal Medical Service, The Local MPs, Police and Education, The Western Australian Men's Shed and The Australian Men's Shed Association

KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:

Jalba Dann, Jimmy Mitchell, John Mitchell, Amosa Sipili, John Oxenham

KEY WORDS:

Youth, community, partnerships, engagement

About the storyteller...

Jalba Dann is an Aboriginal Police Liaison Officer, Chairperson for the Carnarvon Community Men's Group and also works at the Carnarvon PCYC.

About The Carnarvon Community Men's Group...

The Carnarvon Community Men's Group is a place for the men of Carnarvon to meet weekly and discuss the current issues affecting Carnarvon and identify possible solutions. The group also provides the opportunity to discuss other "men" issues. The Carnarvon Men's Group have been instrumental in assisting the PCYC to coordinate camps with young people where they are provided the opportunity to become more culturally aware and are mentored by Indigenous Elders and a WA Aboriginal Police Liaison Officer. Over the years, the group has acquired resources which assist them to become more self-sufficient such as the acquisition of a bus from Rio Tinto which is hired out to the community and other events.



Canoeing at the boy's camp

Once upon a time...

back in 2011, several of the senior Elders met to discuss numerous issues of concern. We were particularly worried about the lack of activities for the youth in Carnarvon.

As in many small towns, there was not only a lack of youth focused facilities but also hardly any programs aimed specifically at the local kids to ensure they remained engaged, off the streets and out of trouble. They are not necessarily bad kids but are often a bit lost or just need some guidance and focus. We decided that our main priority would be to focus on implementing programs to keep the youth busy so we could keep the crime levels down and the kids out of the prisons, hospitals and the courts.

The other issue discussed was the need to provide a culturally safe space for the men to come together and discuss ideas and issues affecting them. We decided to start a Men's Group and call it the Carnarvon Community Men's Group. We started out with only a few members, and I was invited to join as the chairperson which was a role I was very happy to take on. We now have 15 members and we meet in our shed at the PCYC every Tuesday.



John Mitchell, Amosa Sipili, Jalba Dann, Jimmy Mitchell

The Men's Group has several purposes; it gets us out of the home environment, provides an opportunity to catch up with old friends and have a good yarn and a cup of tea together. It keeps our loneliness at bay and provides a culturally appropriate space to discuss the best ways to focus on crime prevention for our youth.

And then one day...

we began our approach to keeping our young people safe by contacting different organisations for funding to facilitate camps for the kids. We started out with the young men but have since expanded to provide camps for young women as well. We decided to target youth from the age of 12 to 18 years and also work with the juvenile justice kids. One of the first aims was to acquire a bus to transport the kids on the camps. So we submitted an application to Rio Tinto which was successful. We purchased a bus which is used for our camps and other programs that we run in partnerships with governmental and community services and we also hire it out to the community-which is fantastic as it allows us to be more self-sufficient.

In 2014, we facilitated three successful camps; the Shark Bay Leadership and Cultural Awareness Camp for young men aged 10 to 15 years, the Mungullah Community Girls Healing Camp in the July school holidays at Boologorro Station and the Mungullah Community Girls Leadership and the Cultural Awareness Camp at Shark Bay. The Gubinge Program which is another one of our initiatives was developed on the back of a journey taken by the men to Broome and Beagle Bay in the far north. We also established a trial horticultural project with the Department of Agriculture and Research who

provided land to be able to plant 20 to 30 trees. The trees have grown and provided some fruit, so the trial has definitely been a success. We are currently attempting to secure more land to develop a larger crop and more produce so we can generate income to facilitate our youth based programs.

We are now in partnerships with several organisations to facilitate our programs; the PCYC, Rio Tinto, the Carnarvon Shire Council, the Department of Sport and Recreation, Youth Justice Service, the Department for Child Protection and Family Support, Aboriginal Medical Service, the Local MPs, Police and Education, the Western Australian Men's Shed and the Australian Men's Shed Association. Our funding over the last few years has come from state and federal government grants, donations, gifts, fund raising, member donation and partnerships with community and state Indigenous services such as the health and education sector.

And because of that...

the camp we held earlier this year at Shark Bay for around 12 young people was a resounding success. We approached the kids on the streets to give them permission slips to take home to their parents. Before we left, the kids were asking us how long we were going for and when we told them four days, they complained that it was too long to be away. However, as we boarded the bus to come home, they said it was too short and they wanted to stay as they were having so much fun. Word spread quickly around the schools and we were inundated with requests for another camp. These camps are designed to get the kids to reconnect with Country. We take them into the heart of the bush and expose them to a different environment that is stimulating and exciting because it provides challenges for the boys.



"We are mentors, we like to help make changes for the younger generation, they are the up and coming future, they are good kids and we want to see them employed and engaged in life so we can die happy knowing they have a good future." Jimmy Mitchell and John Mitchell



“This is why we do this, so our youth can experience the sense of freedom and feeling alive that comes from being in the Country.”

They love to see the animals, go fishing, hunting and reconnect with nature. For some of them, it's the first time they have had a camping experience sleeping under the stars.

The schools do provide the opportunity to go camping but it's generally on a sports camp to a regional town such as Geraldton. All these camps offer is more of the same; bright lights, shopping malls and continued access to technology. We think they need to have a break from technology and social media so they can establish friendships and engage in and enjoy their natural environment. On this particular boys camp we decided to take their phones and iPad's off them for the duration. We handed their devices back on the last day so they could contact their parents.

At one point, while camped out in the open, one of the young kids asked me if we had stars in Carnarvon because unbelievably, he had never seen them before and obviously had never been camping. This opened up a long conversation about stars- we discussed the Emu Head, the Saucepans and the Three Wise Men and when we were heading home, this young man thanked me and said that he'd had the best time of his life. This is why we do this, so our youth can experience the sense of freedom and feeling alive that comes from being in the Country.

I definitely saw a positive change in the boys as a direct result of being on the camp. After we returned from that trip, many of the parents would approach me and say how happy they were that we took the boys camping because they can't provide those opportunities for their kids.

And since that day...

we are currently trying to get a Rangers program up and running with funding from the Education Department. The goal is for our young people to be involved in caring for their Country, land conservation, awareness and knowledge of animals, plants, and sea and coast line. The young people will earn certificates towards further study or traineeships in this area.

We recently went to Exmouth for a consultation with some of the local senior men who are about to open their own Men's Shed. There seems to be real movement in this space at the moment which is fantastic. They invited us to come and talk to them about what we do and to share how we operate. The meeting went really well and it was a great experience to share some of our stories with each other. In the near future we are also heading down to Perth for the 2014 Beyond Tool's Men's Shed Conference to present a paper.

The conference is held by The West Australian Men's Shed Association (WAMSA) and provides men with the opportunity to learn more about operating and maintaining successful Men's Sheds in your community so we are really looking forward to that opportunity.

Although we have designed several excellent programs that we have implemented in the past and are ready to keep moving forward, the lack of sustained funding is an issue. We are presently in discussions with Rio Tinto to secure more funding but there are never any guarantees. We remain positive though that our programs will continue to be funded because we think they provide an important service for the youth and we have so much more to offer. Although our current focus is on the kids, we are hoping to expand and develop several camps for the men involved in the group as we all need to have that experience of being on Country and maintaining those important cultural connections.



Camp activities

YO! (CARNARVON YOUTH OUTREACH SERVICE)

ORGANISATIONS NAME:

Carnarvon Youth Outreach Service (YO!)

CONTACT PERSON:

Beverley Hudson

EMAIL AND WEBSITE:

tl.youth@carnarvon.wa.gov.au

PROGRAM/PROJECT PARTNERS:

Carnarvon Senior College

KEY STAFF/PEOPLE INVOLVED:

Kim Sweetman, Elicia Petite

KEY WORDS:

Youth, school engagement, collaboration, partnerships

About the storytellers...

Beverley Hudson is the Team Leader at The Youth Outreach Service and Elicia Petite teaches the children at the Youth Outreach Service.

About the Carnarvon Youth Outreach Service...

The Shire of Carnarvon auspices the Carnarvon Youth Outreach Service (CYOS), a service which aims to support our local young people through a range of services offered. Operating five days a week, Tuesday – Saturday, the Carnarvon Youth Outreach Services targets young people at risk and has a strong focus on one-to-one mentoring and support, as well as diverting young people away from anti-social activities and therefore the justice system.

The Carnarvon Youth Outreach Service works closely with a number of local service providers, schools and Government Departments including Department for Child Protection and Department of Correctional Services, Department of Sports and Recreation and many sporting and social clubs to ensure that young people and their families get the best support possible.



Once upon a time...

early in 2014, the Federal Government rolled out a Remote School Attendance Strategy (RSAS) to drastically improve low school attendance numbers. Our remote North-West town of Carnarvon was one of the 25 regions identified as having significantly high numbers of non-attending school children. Part of the initial strategy for Carnarvon was to send dedicated RSAS workers to pick up students from their homes and take them to school. This is a great initiative but only part of the overall solution.

When the Government introduced this strategy, our team at Carnarvon Youth Outreach Service (now known as YO!, short for Youth Outreach), thought it was a golden opportunity to target local youth identified as high risk, by working collaboratively with the local high school and community. These high risk

youth are the ones who face the biggest barriers to education, often with challenges at home which makes it difficult for them to attend school.

Our YO! staff got together to identify the target group of high risk youth and pinpoint how we could support them to start attending school regularly. Research shows that Year 9 Indigenous boys and girls are the most disengaged from school. They often engage in criminal behaviour and struggle the most out of all the year groups. Some have the lowest school attendance rates (0 to 50 per cent), which makes them the hardest group to address. In addition, a percentage of these youth have not been to school for months or even years. They are also the group who have the least amount of programs focused on them, making their needs an absolute priority.

We decided it was imperative to design a 'return to school' strategy for this group. We recognised the need to tailor a program which incorporated numeracy and literacy learning, building relationships and life skills, all in a safe environment.

And then one day...

we started the program in June 2014, after the Federal Government rolled out the strategy in January. The funding is facilitated through the YO! service and has allowed us to acquire the use of a centre in town to deliver the program. The centre is actually the old football club on the oval, so it makes a perfect youth setting. We set up a space similar to a typical classroom but ensured it was more relaxed in order to ease the kids back into the school environment gently and safely.

We identified 18 young people in the community who we felt would benefit from our program. We designed it to run over 15 weeks and employed a wonderful teacher from Perth. As we are a small, remote town, we struggle to attract good teachers so we were lucky to secure Elicia Petite. She developed an excellent program to cater to our target group of children. As these students come to us with extremely varied levels of learning and often have big gaps in their education, we have designed a flexible program to fit each student's individual needs.



Johnny-Rae Ryder

Elicia delivers the program Tuesday to Friday with the help of a couple of other inspired youth workers. Together we encourage the students to rediscover that learning can be exciting. We assess the children's literacy and numeracy skills and design the program around their academic levels and needs and what they can each cope with.



Many hands make light work



"I was out at one of the communities recently and they still speak in language. They learn language at school, 50 per cent of the curriculum is in their language and 50 percent in English. I said, "Do you realise how smart you guys are? You speak two languages". These kids need to take credit and understand how special that is."
Beverley Hudson

Part of this process includes identifying and where possible, removing the barriers which may hinder each of these beautiful children from engaging and learning. These children come from varied backgrounds (and sometimes difficult home situations) which many of us would struggle to relate to. Part of our objective is to provide these children with more options and choices in life by opening the doors to a good education as we believe that education is the key to providing opportunities.

Luckily for the youth in this program, their teacher Elicia also comes from a musical background and when she moved to Carnarvon she brought a piano, guitar, ukuleles and a flute with her. She is able to provide regular music lessons during the classes, which is a fun and joyful experience for the kids. Time is also set aside each day to go outdoors and engage in physical activity. Children naturally gravitate towards music and sport; hence both elements are a priority in the program. We try to incorporate social development with academic learning, therefore the atmosphere in the YO! classroom is calm, happy and fun; as after all, learning should be fun and engaging. Our success is marked by how many young people we can get back to school and so far our results have outshone our expectations, which is all the encouragement we need to continue developing this brilliant program.

The program really is an excellent alternative pathway back into school. We are trying to tap into a child's natural desire to learn by creating a stimulating environment and we have designed it to be as non-daunting for the students as possible, to ease them back into learning gently. To that end, the classes only run from 8:30am until 12pm. We are finding that three or four students frequently stay longer because



Reeka Jones

they are enjoying the learning environment, which is very encouraging. The greatest challenge we often face is actually locating the children and physically getting them to school. Once they are here we are finding they are very keen to learn and are all making amazing progress in both their learning outcomes and ability to be present in a classroom setting. Watching their confidence soar is heart-warming. The other great thing is that the classes have been well received by the community, with a lot of support from different Aboriginal groups and parents in town.

And because of that...

although it is a very new program, it is starting to fall into place and we are already seeing great success with nearly 20 per cent of our initial enrolled children actually enrolled back and attending school regularly. We are aware that for many, this is a significant, huge change in their lives. If you haven't been to school in a long time, how do you suddenly, in five weeks, 10 weeks, 15 weeks, return on a consistent basis? We need to constantly re-assess our approach. It's a challenge for us as these youth come in with very complex issues; they don't just disengage from school for no reason and the fact that we have them turning up to YO! is pretty remarkable.



The kids with the YO! team

Some of our students may show up and sit there, not engaging in school work at all, but at least they are there. Turning up is half the battle. A particular child may only be engaged for half an hour a week, but because he is here, we have a chance to reach him and he obviously, for whatever reason, wants to be here because otherwise he wouldn't be. We want our young people to understand that everyone faces adversity at times and they should be proud of their heritage.

And since that day...

we have been very fortunate with the level of support from the Carnarvon community. Patrick Parrelli from the Aboriginal Medical Service has been fantastic; he has been dropping in to the classes to help us run the program. The School Engagement Officers who are all local Aboriginal people also pop over to the centre during the mornings to sit and observe how the kids are tracking. It really is a collective effort and it needs to be because these kids need as much support as possible. We are only funded to run this initiative until the end of 2014; however, we are in the process of applying for additional funding because we think this program is vital for our children. Without it, we feel that we will lose them to a bleak future. The success of the program so far cannot be ignored.

Our aim is to secure the resources to build on and extend our program further. We would like to employ an Aboriginal trainee youth worker so the

kids have someone they can identify with and look up to. We are also hoping to expand the centre within our current building. At the moment we are only using the hall, the kitchen, the umpire rooms and one of the locker rooms. We need more space!

Our overall focus is to build some resilience in these young people so they become happy and confident in what they are doing. We want them to feel comfortable going back into the school environment and accept that it's okay to be at different levels as we all learn in different ways. We hope to teach them skills to deal with adversity, so if they are faced with bullying, they will have the skills to cope and have the confidence to ask for help rather than trying to deal with it alone. We want to help them to learn to fit into the world and understand they are entitled to learn; it is their birthright. We want them to feel empowered and say, "I have a right to learn and this will be really good for me". If the kids get one thing out of this program, it's the capacity to envisage and create a positive future for themselves.



Marettta Farrell



DIGS: DROP IN GIRLS' SPACE

ORGANISATIONS NAME:

PCYC Drop In Girls' Space (DIGS)

CONTACT PERSON:

Benita Donda

EMAIL AND WEBSITE:

<http://www.wapcyc.com.au/>

benita.donda@wapcyc.com.au

PROGRAM/PROJECT PARTNERS:

Salvation Army/Employment Plus, Carnarvon Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation, Carnarvon Aboriginal Congress, Shire of Carnarvon- Youth Outreach Service, Soroptimist, Carnarvon Community College, WA Country Health Service- Midwest, Aboriginal Family Law Service, Attorney Generals Department, Carnarvon Aboriginal Reference Group (CARG), Carnarvon Youth Agency Network (CYAN).

KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:

Benita Donda, Joan Sedgwick, Jackie Cameron, Eleanor Mulcahy and Gail Bellotti

KEY WORDS:

Youth, community engagement, relationships, self-esteem, girl power!

About the storyteller...

Benita Donda is the Manager of the Carnarvon PCYC.

About DIGS...

The PCYC Drop In Girls' Space is an initiative of the Carnarvon PCYC. It provides a meeting place for young women to come together outside of their school environment and participate in activities and access information and assistance in a non-judgemental environment.



Cooking yummy food at the Drop In Space



Once upon a time...

in mid-2012, the Carnarvon's Girls' Group was formed by a group of women from the Carnarvon Aboriginal Congress, to specifically target young Indigenous girls. Collaboration between the Carnarvon Aboriginal Congress and the Carnarvon PCYC identified a need for a meeting place for young women where they could come together outside of their school environment and participate in activities and access information and assistance in a non-judgemental environment. We noticed that the girls were often shy and intimidated by the boys in their peer group which meant they were less likely to participate in activities and voice issues affecting them. So, it was agreed that there needed to be a safe and comfortable space that the girls could go to after school hours, which would keep them off the streets

and out of any potential trouble. The manager at the time applied for the Royalty for Region's grant so that funds could be made available for a permanent space. Thankfully the grant was successful and a designated space for the group was founded at the Carnarvon PCYC, namely the multi-purpose shed. Unfortunately, the internal fittings of the new space remained incomplete and therefore the space wasn't utilised as they had hoped.

And then one day...

after a few years of the space being vacant, the Carnarvon Girls' Group program was re-introduced and is now known as the after school Drop In Girls' Space (DIGS). The centre had virtually no facilities so additional funding was secured for installation



Making jewellery

of flooring, a kitchen, computers and furniture. It was important to obtain all the resources the girls needed so that they could participate in activities such as arts and craft, grooming and deportment and cooking. At first, the program was trialed for both primary and high school girls to see what age group the centre would appeal to. Each of the local schools were approached to determine what the girls were interested in gaining from this space and if it would be something that they would consider worthwhile and engaging. In the first week only five or so girls attended, however, as word spread the following week, numbers grew to 15 and then to 30 in the weeks proceeding. Currently, the numbers are quite consistent with about 20 girls attending each day which has exceeded our expectations, and they absolutely love it! The afternoon tea we provide is also a real draw card for many of our girls who don't always eat lunch at school so it is also good to provide nutritious snacks for them.

And because of that...

we are getting a lot of positive feedback from parents and teachers and reports that the girls are always talking about DIGS and already identify themselves as 'DIGS girls'. Another fantastic outcome is that the number of girls who were fighting at school have reduced dramatically. We believe that this is due in part to the time spent together outside of the school environment, which allows the girls to get to know each other and realise that they actually get along really well. The girls have already made up their own rules for the space and they have a lot of respect for it, which is such a positive thing as it gives them a sense of ownership, something we continue to encourage! We are now looking at tying DIGS in with attendance at the schools and are intending to

conduct a camp at the end of the term as a reward. It is an excellent incentive for the girls to attend school, but also linking it in with our drop in space is great because we are forming a strong relationship with the local schools. This partnership enables us to report back on the girls' progress and also receive any updates from the schools.

DIGS is now fostering a whole community approach to supporting young women as they develop, with a key goal of ensuring that they mature and are mentored in a safe and comfortable environment. The key principle that mentoring young people is a collective responsibility, guides us. To achieve this, the Carnarvon PCYC has established a multiplicity of partnerships between schools and training providers, business and industry, community organisations, parents and families. The PCYC encourages these groups to form locally relevant partnerships that harness community resources and share responsibility for young people's learning and development. In this space young women receive information on drugs and alcohol, protective behaviours, workshops on health and hygiene and mentoring from professional women in the community to empower them to be able to make informed decisions and choices in their everyday lives.

These workshops are extremely valuable for the girls. We also have some local Indigenous women who volunteer their time to spend with the girls at the centre to provide a mentorship role. These women are well respected in the community and are an integral part of the program as many of them are



The finished product!



“We believe it is vitally important to provide less structured activities and opportunities outside of the school environment which allow the girls to develop their social skills, gain self-esteem and build their confidence in a safe, culturally appropriate space.”

either related to the girls or know their families. It makes the atmosphere very familiar and comfortable. The Carnarvon PCYC works closely with the women to put together a schedule that determines both their availability and set activities they have identified as being integral to supporting the development of these young women. It is important that our volunteers also find the experience enjoyable as they are offering their personal time and without them it would not be possible to operate programs such as DIGS so successfully.

And since that day...

we are really surprised with the number of young girls that are using and enjoying the drop in centre and we are regularly at capacity! The majority of the girls attending are from the primary schools and we believe it is because there are not many programs offered to the younger girls during and after school hours besides activities such as netball and soccer, both seasonal sports. We believe that sport and recreational options are important but there needs to be alternatives for the girls so they have a wider range of activities to choose from. The activities we offer help develop the girls as they grow into mature young women. What has been identified is that because we are capturing their interest at such a young age, before they are influenced by their peers and other social factors in high school, we are able to be much more influential in instilling positive behaviours and values - this is where we feel we can make a real difference.

At the moment we only have a small pool of funding that unfortunately won't last forever, so we are always looking for opportunities for more sustainable funding. The Carnarvon PCYC has received regular support from organisations such as Horizon Power and Rio Tinto and local community groups who have been phenomenal in supporting community projects like ours so we are hoping to secure ongoing funding from them to facilitate our program long term. However, I think what will make this program really successful is the multi-agency approach we are adopting with the space. We have

several organisations really interested in partnering with us and we are encouraging other agencies in the community and beyond to have ownership of this space too so that they feel they have a strong attachment to it.

We also encourage the girls to be involved in a range of other activities at the PCYC such as the school holiday program, monthly disco nights, gymnastics, karate and basketball. Our program has gone from strength to strength in a short period of time and we are immensely proud of how popular it is and how engaged the girls are with both the program and with each other. We believe it is vitally important to provide less structured activities and opportunities outside of the school environment which allow the girls to develop their social skills, gain self-esteem and build their confidence in a safe, culturally appropriate space.

About the PCYC...

The Carnarvon PCYC was established in 1987 and was purchased outright in 1993 after major fundraising activities took place and through the generosity of the WA Lotteries Commission, Department of Sport and Recreation and Local Government.

The Carnarvon PCYC began as a recreation centre that provided the community with activities primarily for youth, but also for the whole community. In the past, the WA Police were heavily involved with the PCYC but the WA Police have since separated and the Police Officers no longer run the PCYC, however remain as key partners of WA PCYC.

Volunteers are the backbone of the organisation and continue to go above and beyond to support the organisation and its programs. When the PCYC first started only traditional activities such as gymnastics, karate and basketball were on offer, but now there is a variety of other specialised programs for the community to be involved in.

A key focus of the community organisation is to provide targeted and diversionary programs that can be delivered to kids at risk or disengaged from the community, school environment or socially. The PCYC also offers a lot of support to community groups such as the Carnarvon Community Men's Group.



The Kingsford Lions Football Club



PCYC Kingsford Lions Football Club...

In 2013 the Carnarvon PCYC was approached by the Gascoyne Football Association to take on the Kingsford Lions Football Club which was in danger of folding, leaving the junior players without an opportunity to play. The proposal was supported by the Carnarvon PCYC Management Committee for an initial trial period of 12 months.

The clubs' first season under the auspice of the Carnarvon PCYC was very successful with the Nippers players winning their grand final game. At the moment there are approximately 40 boys signed up as well as a mix of robust young girls. The team is supported by a coach and assistant volunteer coach and regular PCYC volunteers who assist with preparing and cooking food after each game which is great for the kids because they don't go home hungry.

The provision of a light meal at the end of the games is always a big hit with the players and local crime statistics have shown dramatic improvement in relation to youth offences. There have been immense benefits for the young players since the PCYC took on the Kingsford Lions Football Club including a noticeable improvement in the players' attitudes both on and off the field.

We have many aspiring football players and a wealth of talent here in Carnarvon that needs to be tapped into. We are also finding that the kids are gaining direction and have something to look forward to each week, which is really great. It is also improving the kids' discipline and development of their leadership skills. The Carnarvon PCYC is looking forward to another great season commencing in April 2015!

School Holiday Program...

Our school holiday program has been running for many years in conjunction with the Shire of Carnarvon and in recent years has been strongly supported by Inclusion WA enabling the program to become very successful. Numerous reports have shown that the school holiday period is when most children are bored and at a higher risk of offending.

This program aims to intervene and divert youth away from criminal offences which is a positive for the whole community. The program is run every day for the two weeks of the school holidays and usually with one to two activities on offer per day. Each year we are seeing the program grow in size and the last school holiday program was the largest in the state!

With this program we work closely with local organisations to form partnerships. Most recently, we have had organisations such as the Carnarvon Yacht Club and Golf Club become actively involved with the program which has given us the opportunity to offer a wide variety of activities, including sailing, golfing, bowling and tennis.

We are excited to be attracting a lot of new organisations as it really adds to the strength of the School Holiday Program. In terms of funding, the PCYC strongly relies on donations and sponsorships from local organisations such as Friends of Citizens Under Stress (FOCUS). The Department of Sport and Recreation have also been very supportive in providing much needed funding.

JOHN OXENHAM: THE INSPIRING STORY OF A COMMUNITY LEADER

CONTACT PERSON:

John Oxenham

EMAIL AND WEBSITE:

j.oxenham41@gmail.com

KEY WORDS:

Country, culture, collaboration, family, community development, Men's Group

About the storyteller...

John Oxenham is a Mulgana Elder from Carnarvon in Western Australia's Gascoyne region. He is a member of the Carnarvon Community Men's Group, a role model and mentor for young Indigenous people and works in the community development space to provide more opportunities for Aboriginal people.



Mulgana Elder John Oxenham



Once upon a time...

when I was a young fella, I lived in Shark Bay which is about three hours drive from Carnarvon. It used to take us three days to get there before the roads were sealed. I was one of 12 brothers and sisters and we all went to the local school, but when I was 14, I decided to leave. After I left school, I got a job on Peron Station and stayed there for two years where I learnt the basics of station work. Back in those days, everyone worked; there was hardly anyone on the dole. After that, I went over to Dirk Hartog Island and worked with my uncles.

In those days we were running 26 000 sheep on the property. After a few months of working there, my boss said, "We're all going away for Christmas, can you look after the station for a month?" I was only 16 then but was confident enough to take the job on. It was just me and an old yardman taking care of the entire station and the only way to keep in touch

with the boss and let him know how we were going was through a two-way radio. We did this every morning by calling up the Flying Doctor and putting in a report. After two years there, I decided I wanted a change and left to begin working at Wooramel Station for 18 months which isn't too far from Carnarvon. By the time I was in my 20's I returned to Shark Bay where I worked with my dad fishing for 12 months and I was able to help him pay for his boat. I stayed in Shark Bay for a while longer and spent some time working in the fish factory. It was actually the first factory in WA where they exported fish to the east coast, and after some time I was promoted up to the position of foreman in charge of up to 50 people, 36 fish processers and 14 general hands.

I then went over to Useless Loop and was working for a salt company and in charge of earthmoving machines and building the first salt ponds. This position involved laying down almost 83 miles of plastic to keep the fresh water out. It was a big job and a huge responsibility; I had about 85 people working for me building the ponds, sampling the gypsum, growing, harvesting, washing, and stockpiling the salt and loading salt onto ships for export to Japan.

In 1970 we moved to Carnarvon where I worked on the Texada salt mines (now Rio Tinto Lake McLeod) as a machine operator for two years. I then took on the responsibility of brine control and was in charge of collecting brine, pumping it into crystallisers, growing salt and preparing salt ponds for harvest.

In 1980 we had a big cyclone, which wrecked the loading jetty and caused a lot of damage to the equipment on site, and the company had to stand down some staff. My best mate Bob Otway and myself decided that we would give our jobs to some older workers and go and buy a plantation.

We purchased the plantation and proceeded to produce and sell fruit and vegetables. In 1985 we purchased a second plantation, which my family moved onto, and over the next 22 years we ran it successfully whilst raising our four children. Over this period, we were responsible for training many of the local Carnarvon kids on the plantation in various areas of production.

And then one day...

about five years ago, after having a break from working due to retiring, I got involved with some friends and formed the local Carnarvon Men's Group. I was growing increasingly concerned about the issues surrounding the local Aboriginal kids, they were playing up and most didn't have a male role model or father figure to guide them through their pivotal teenage years. I was also aware that the local agencies often turned a blind eye to the numerous problems facing kids; putting them in the 'too hard basket'.

At the moment in Carnarvon, there are about 600 kids enrolled in school but approximately 220 of them are not attending at all, so the aim of the Men's Group is to help agencies get the kids off the streets, out of trouble and back attending school regularly. When we decided to start this group, it was with the intention to offer these kids a role model, a father figure and just to be their dad for a day; for a month or for 10 years, whatever it took to have a positive impact.

The only role models many of these kids have experienced are sports people and personalities who would come into the school and spend a day or two with them, which is just not enough time. These kids need consistent support particularly if it's not coming from their families, which is the reason why our group is making a real difference; we know our community and we are here for the long term.

One day recently, we took the kids out fishing and one little fella came up and said to me, "Are you Brian Browns pop?" and I said, "Yeah, why?" And he said "I haven't got a pop, can you be my pop?" to which I replied, "Of course". As long as the kids are secure and they've got someone to look up to, that is what

matters. A lot of them are looking for role models in their families; there are a lot of males around but not many men. I believe when you become a man you actually take responsibility for your family. When you start a family you don't just go and walk to the dole office and pick up your pay, you go out and get a job and support your family. That is when you become a man. So we've also got to focus on getting these men up to scratch so they can assume responsibility for their families and contribute to their community meaningfully. There is a lot of work to be done.

"One of our primary aims is to get people back in touch with Country and provide a space where they will be able to learn about their culture, history and identity and reconnect with who they are."



And because of that...

aside from the work we are doing with the Men's Group, I am also doing some work in the community development space. I became a member of the Carnarvon Aboriginal Reference Group, which is a non-Government group made up of members from five language groups across the Gascoyne Region. The language groups are Yinggarda, Bayungu, Thalanyji, Thudgari and Malgana. As members of the group our roles are to represent our language group and share cultural knowledge and links with our communities.

This is an excellent example of successful community development because Aboriginal people are the facilitators of this reference group therefore we have autonomy. This helps to get our ideas heard and it is overall a more powerful process than if it was run by non-Aboriginal people. In the past, people from Perth would come to Carnarvon to try to fix a 'black fella problem' and they consult with all the agencies and then come to us and say, "We are going to fix this problem" and we'd say, "How many black fellas have you spoken to?" And the answer is always 'none'. So, nothing is going to change. If you want to fix a



problem you come and talk to us because we are the ones who know what's best for our people and will be able to consult properly on these issues to identify solutions. It really is as simple as that.

Over the last few years we have built Carnarvon's governance model. This model brings communities and government agencies together to sort out the problems we have in our region. Groups involved are: Carnarvon Aboriginal Reference Group, Carnarvon Youth Agency Network, Carnarvon Non Government Organisations Network, Mental Health Working Group, Alcohol and Other Drugs Working Group, Attendance and Engagement Working Group, Carnarvon Human Services Agency Group and the Midwest Gascoyne Human Services Regional Managers Group.

And since that day...

I was in the hospital a couple of months ago and a nurse asked if I worked with the Carnarvon Community Men's Group, I asked why and she said that they have young people coming in every night either drunk or on drugs. She then asked me if I could talk to the youth who came into the hospital in this state. One young fella came in that night and was very drunk. I let him sleep for a few hours and when he woke up I asked him what was going on with all the young fellas in town he said, "Uncle, we don't know who we are. We don't know where we come from, we don't know where we are going, we do all training courses but we can't get a job so we just drink..." This is so sad to hear, this guy is only 22 years old and that conversation really stayed with me. This situation is all too common in Carnarvon and it is hearing stories like this that drives my desire to help change these attitudes and work on fixing these issues.

So, our focus at the moment is to provide tangible solutions and one of these solutions is to provide employment for young people. A couple of young fellas and I are in the process of putting a business plan together to purchase a station near Carnarvon which will be a community project that will eventually run agriculture, horticulture and tourism projects

as well as several other ventures. We hope to start farming goats because the market is ripe for goats and it is only going to increase. We will also form partnerships with other stations in the region. At the moment I have two consultants and we are collaborating on a business plan and looking at funding opportunities to support the project. This plan will be independent of government, build human capacity and has the potential to be a successful, sustainable business. I have experience in running successful businesses so I am definitely up for this challenge. The aim is to create 100 – 200 jobs, particularly targeting the youth but also some of the Elders to be mentors to the youth. The station will also be a space for the Men's Group to mentor the kids and encourage families to spend time on Country. We are just going to take this project head on, our own way- and show the way for other communities.

Our main objective is to get the kids back on track by providing them with stable jobs so they have a sense of purpose. Although we will focus on the youth and adults from this region in particular, we will eventually target kids from all over the state. Our other aim, which is equally important, is to get people back in touch with Country and provide a space where they will be able to learn about their culture, history and identity and reconnect with who they are.



THE MUNGULLAH CLEAN UP

ORGANISATION NAME:

Bundiyarra Aboriginal Community Aboriginal Corporation

CONTACT PERSON:

Gordon Gray

EMAIL AND WEBSITE:

www.bundiyarra.org.au;
coordinator@bundiyarra.org.au

PROGRAM/PROJECT PARTNERS:

Funded and fully supported by the Department of Health, Aboriginal Health Directorate

KEY STAFF/PEOPLE INVOLVED:

Gordon Gray

KEY WORDS:

Environmental health, collaboration, team work, healthy homes, healthy people

About the storyteller...

Gordon Gray is the Bundiyarra Environmental Health Team Coordinator.

About Bundiyarra Aboriginal Community Aboriginal Corporation...

Bundiyarra in the Wajarri dialect means 'a good and friendly place to be'. The Bundiyarra Aboriginal Community Aboriginal Corporation acts as an umbrella body for a number of local Aboriginal organisations. The objectives of the organisation include the provision of accounting, medical and other community services, support for their social and economic development, assistance in gaining education, employment training and housing and encouragement of their aim to manage their own affairs. Bundiyarra also seeks to help members maintain and continue their traditional culture, promote awareness of Aboriginal culture and traditional practices through displays at family days and local festivals, and help build trust and friendship between Bundiyarra and the wider community. Bundiyarra has also been active in local community issues impacting on the Aboriginal community.

Bundiyarra Aboriginal



Community Aboriginal Corporation - BACAC

Once upon a time...

we were concerned about the level of overcrowding in many of the homes in major towns such as Carnarvon, Meekatharra and Geraldton. As with other homes in regions throughout WA, the overcrowding issues stem from circumstances such as people and families moving into major towns due to the lack of services and programs in their remote communities and dysfunction within those communities.

Many families who already live in a house in town are often obligated to take in relatives who move there, which leads to overcrowding and additional pressure on everyday services such as power, water and sewerage utilities. Overcrowding is a real concern in Aboriginal homes in these particular towns because



The Team

the rubbish generated by too many people in one house can become unmanageable. We are aware that there is a strong link between the build-up of rubbish in and around the home and the risks this poses to people's health – particularly relating to pests and germs breeding in the rubbish and the potential for them to have a detrimental affect on the people living in the homes.

Four years ago, Bundiyarra received funding through the Department of Health to look after the environmental health needs of three communities in the Mid-West; Ardaloo Aboriginal Corporation, Pia Wajarri and Barrawel. At this time, there was one person employed in an environment and health position and he was located out at one of the communities. However, because of time and distance and being under resourced, it was difficult for him to look after all three communities and his work became untenable. So, Bundiyarra brought the program back to Geraldton to develop more of a regional strategy. As part of that strategy, we formed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in Geraldton.

The Memorandum of Understanding was entered into by the City of Geraldton, Shire of Greenough and the Aboriginal Communities of Geraldton-Greenough. The MOU provides a framework for partnership by acknowledging the contribution and history of Indigenous peoples. Specifically, under the MOU, the Geraldton and Greenough Councils commit to promoting and supporting

Aboriginal events, celebrations and culture as well as encouraging participation and promoting Aboriginal employment. So, we took on the role of facilitating the clean-up in these communities, rather than the monitoring of it and the City provided support around environmental health. Although we weren't funded to that capacity at that time, we certainly saw a need and as we have two trucks and two trailers, that enabled us to go and clean up the communities.

And then one day...

given that the strategy had a regional focus, and as Bundiyarra has a strong outreach to the Mid-West/Gascoyne health region communities, we decided to spread our services a little further and in April we coordinated a community clean up on houses and properties in Carnarvon together with several students enrolled in the Certificate II course for Indigenous Environmental Health.

Thirteen of these trainees were from Gascoyne Asset Maintenance (GAM), the Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP) provider for this region and one trainee (Jeffrey Ryder) is employed as an Aboriginal Environmental Health Worker (AEHW) with the Gascoyne Population Health Unit in Carnarvon. The clean-up took place from the 14-17th April 2014. It was a massive team effort!

We removed approximately 30 tandem trailer loads of rubbish from Carnarvon and 12 trailer loads from Mungullah and transported them to their rightful home, the Carnarvon rubbish tip! In total, we cleaned up around 16 tons of household rubbish which was no small feat. We observed that the amount of waste taken from Mungullah was much smaller than last year which indicated that the Mungullah residents are becoming more conscious about their rubbish disposal, which is fantastic. This indicates that if the support is there, people will respond.

Greg McConkey from Empower Education, Graham Hulett from the Department of Housing Carnarvon, Gary Heir from the Department of Housing Geraldton and Leisha Norling, Mungullah Community and Women's coordinator at Mungullah also participated in the clean-up. Altogether, around 20 environmental health workers and trainees took part in the exercise assisted by community members and some enthusiastic children. We focussed our clean-up efforts mainly on the town of Carnarvon but also visited Mungullah again (as we had been there 12 months prior).



Operation Clean Up!

The reason we choose Carnarvon and Mungullah was because we know they had been trying to set up their own environmental health team but they were struggling due to a lack of resources. The Mungullah Community had a part time person but he was focussing mainly on dog health. This was an exceptional little program but obviously didn't address the environmental health housing issues. We decided to go up there, give them a hand and offer our practical support and advice by encouraging them to develop their own program. The reality is, if you have a vehicle and a trailer and three sets of hands, you can cover a big area and achieve a lot, and that's all you really need. However, you have to have that ongoing physical labour support because it's a hands on job and one part time person employed in that capacity is just not enough.

And because of that...

many residents who are tenants of the Department of Housing were extremely grateful for the assistance as several are physically unable to move accumulated rubbish themselves. Some residents even offered to pay us for the service! We continue to monitor and evaluate our clients. We have been concerned that we are not offering enough education so we have recently rejuvenated a partnership with Mission Australia who deliver The Step Program. The Step Program trains people in environmental health issues within their homes; they provide people with useful tips on how to use products such as vinegar to

clean surfaces etc. While they do that, we clean up the rubbish. We have recently applied to the City of Geraldton for a grant to purchase mops and buckets and cleaning products for people who have big families with lots of children and can't afford essential items. When we drop off these goods to people they are always so grateful.

One thing we are noticing is that if there is limited access to services in the communities or no Community Development Program (CDP) in place, people are moving away from communities and into the larger towns which leads to two or three families living in the one house which has disastrous consequences. The social impact is huge because while people are out in the communities they do have space from one another but when they come together under one small roof, the pressure that is put onto existing services is enormous. I live alone and I empty one rubbish bag a week, can you imagine the amount of rubbish three families produce? What it is also doing, with people moving into town in particular, is putting added pressure on those families who have a tenancy agreement with Homeswest or the Department of Housing.

The environmental and health issues in these towns are big and complex and it's not just about the impacts of overcrowding. There is a small community called Buddindi, on the outskirts of Meekatharra and their water supply is contaminated by uranium, making it unusable. Their water supply needs to be brought in from Meekatharra. This is the sort of thing people have to deal with; we are in Australia, one of



“Other than the enormous benefit to all the people and homes that were the recipients of the community clean-up, one of the other positive outcomes was the unique opportunity for the trainees to engage in real life Aboriginal Environmental Health interventions as it allowed them to gain firsthand knowledge of their capacity to improve the health of the community.”



*Buniyarra Environmental Health
Team: Coordinator Gordon Gray,
Colin Jones, Josh Joseph and
Wesley Hedlam*

the richest countries in the world and these people don't have fresh running water in their community. People will say that they choose to live there but if they were to move into the town then the pressure on mainstream services would undoubtedly triple.

Our environmental health services are funded by the Department of Health and the Department is aware of the problems we face but their hands are tied. However, something really has to be done; it's a state and commonwealth responsibility and while all the bureaucracy takes place, it's the Aboriginal communities in the middle that suffer.

And since that day...

other than the enormous benefit to all the people and homes that were the recipients of the community clean-up, one of the other positive outcomes was the unique opportunity for the trainees to engage in real life Aboriginal environmental health interventions as it allowed them to gain firsthand knowledge of their capacity to improve the health of the community. As well as the big clean up, the trainees also performed some basic repairs to plumbing fixtures in houses, fixing some toilets and replacing taps.

They also treated five homes for insect pests, applying a complete spray and gel treatment. It was a great three days, with nearly sixty homes being visited that were offered Environmental Health intervention in one form or another. The feedback from the trainees was that they thoroughly enjoyed the experience and gained a lot from participating in the clean-up.



What we'd like to have is towns and communities such as Carnarvon and Mungullah with their own environment and health programs so they don't have to rely on Buniyarra coming to town once a year, because once a year is just not enough. We know that the Carnarvon Gascoyne Asset Maintenance (GAM) (which was created in 2006 out of an Aboriginal Housing need to create jobs while maintaining community infrastructure) is keen to help again but they require support. They would need at least one vehicle and one trailer to get a service up and running. I'd like to see this happen so these surrounding communities can be self-sufficient and address their environmental health issues independently.

We can't emphasise the urgency and importance of environmental health and with more support and resources, we will have the ability to take care of our people properly.



The yard pre-clean up

ADA FOSSA: TALES FROM THE BAY

CONTACT PERSON:

Ada Fossa

KEY WORDS:

Memories, history, family, friendships, love, laughter



This story was written by Ada Fossa. It is a small snapshot of her life growing up and living in Shark Bay for a good part of the last 80 years.

Once upon a time...

I was born 1934 in Carnarvon but I moved to Shark Bay with my parents when I was very young and have lived here for most of my life. I am a 6th generation Indigenous resident of Shark Bay and a Malgana Elder. I am the eldest of 12 siblings and I have four children, six grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren. During my childhood we lived at the south end of Shark Bay in the late 1930's, 1940's and 1950's. I had a very happy childhood, we had nothing but we were pretty lucky to have grown up here because it made us appreciate what we had and we never took anything for granted. We would only get to enjoy ice cream about once every six months as we had to rely on the steam ships to bring treats into town. I truly feel that we had the best of both worlds even though we were poor because we had the sea in front of us and the land behind and we knew we could get a meal from either one. We didn't have electricity, just kerosene to run our fridge and light our lamps.

We grew up to be very respectful to our Elders. Grandma and Pop took us walking everywhere because we didn't have any vehicles in those days. If it was good weather they would take us out fishing on the boat. During the holidays, we'd walk from Shark Bay to Monkey Mia. We would walk a certain distance, make a camp, get some rabbits and whatever else to eat, and then the next day we'd keep walking. It was good; they taught us how to survive in the bush, which berries were safe to eat, how to get fresh water. I call those trips 'survival trips' because during the war years times were very uncertain. We had to build our own shelters and when our uncles came home on leave from the war

About the storyteller...

Ada Mary Fossá was born Ada Mary Poland on the 8th November, 1934. She is a 6th generation Indigenous resident of Shark Bay and a Malgana Elder.



Ada at 17 years of age in Shark Bay

they taught us how to use the gas masks because one of the steam ships had been bombed coming down from up north.

We attended the Shark Bay School which had only one room for all the classes. There were about 30 children in the school. We walked to and from school every day which was about a kilometre each way. The children at the school were mostly Aboriginal with only a few white children. Once I reached Year seven I had to go to Geraldton to finish my schooling. I settled in and completed primary school in Geraldton but sadly couldn't complete my upper school studies as I had to head home to help my family as there were now ten children to take care of. I always had ambitions to be a mission nurse and serve in the Islands but unfortunately because we were so poor, this dream was never realised.



*Ada Fossa with her book-**Stories, Laughter and Tears through bygone years in Shark Bay***

And then one day...

I met my first husband when I was 20. He was a handsome Italian boy by the name of Leone Pedrocchi who was holidaying in Shark Bay. Mixed marriages between Aboriginals and whites were very difficult back then, as the government had policies such as the "Assimilation Policy" in place. Although racism was evident there was also some wonderful non Aboriginal people who accepted our marriage and didn't judge us. Our marriage lasted 28 years and we had four beautiful children together but it ended because Leo wanted to leave Shark Bay and I wanted to stay close to my extended family. In 1980 I met and fell in love with my second husband Finn Fossa. Finn was a skipper on the cray fishing boats between Dongara and Darwin. He was Norwegian and larger than life. When we met, he owned an ex-charter boat named "The Western Explorer" better known as "The Western Playboy", as he had an all-female crew. That ended though when I came on the scene, as the only female on board was me.

After we married I became one of the crew on our boat and we would often stay out at sea for two to three weeks fishing. We had a really good life and as the ocean had always been a big part of our lives, I felt right at home on the boat. Finn sadly passed away from lung disease in 2003 which was a devastating loss for me and our family. However, I was surrounded by my amazing family and felt truly blessed for their love and support.



And because of that...

family has always been important to me and I was lucky in the sense that we grew up in such a large, loving family. My Mum and Dad were a very devoted couple so we were very lucky that way. I was particularly close to my grandma Ruby, who was a wise, loving lady. I think everyone loved Grandma Ruby; she took the young ones under her wing and showed us a lot of love. She was the one that used to sit with us and talk and tell us stories; she always made time to sit and speak with us. She was a marvellous lady and very strong too and I think that's where I get a lot of my stubbornness from. My kids always say to me, "Mum you're so stubborn". I think it's just in us to have that inner strength and fortitude and I truly believe it came from Grandma Ruby.

I turned 80 last November and have had some health issues of late. Over the past few years my great grandchildren kept saying to me, "Nan tell us what it was like when you were young". This got me thinking that if anything happened to me, my grandchildren and great children don't know my story or my history. Around this time, I also saw an advertisement in the senior's newspaper from a publishing company called ACASHIC calling on people to write their memories down. I called them to explain a bit about myself and my history and they were keen to collaborate on a book. I then started the process of putting my life into words. Even if it didn't get published I just thought it would be good to have it all recorded for the future generations of my family.

So I began to conjure up all my memories from 80 years of life. It was a mentally and physically draining experience and took me a long time as I had to write it all by hand in an exercise book. It was then typed up by family in Perth so it was a long process. I then had to proof read which took me ages as well! But it was a great experience working with the publishers and wonderful to see my story in print. We titled the book "Stories, Laughter and Tears through Bygone Years in Shark Bay".



"I feel blessed to live in this beautiful heritage listed region of the world. I have so much respect and admiration for my ancestors who faced such adversity in their time, from the pearling era in the 1950's to the challenges of the fishing and sandalwood industries, or working on the stations away from their families. They were all hardworking, respectable citizens who stood tall and faced any hardship that they encountered."

The book became a collection of stories from my memories of growing up and living in Shark Bay with input from some old time residents also included. We held a book launch at the Discovery Centre here in Shark Bay two years ago. We had about 70 people attend and I had to speak publicly which was extremely nerve wracking as I'm a private person. But I did it! It was a proud moment. There are no airs and graces about my book, no research either, just telling it the way it was when we were young and remembering what our parents and grandparents taught us and the places they took us to. It is my hope that it provides some insight into how privileged this present generation is compared to ours many years ago. Over the past couple of years I've since had book signing events in Geraldton, Albany and a couple in Perth so the book has had great exposure over the state.

And since that day...

I'm happy living here, my family always want me to move closer to them but while I'm able to get around I want to live here. It's my home. Most of my oldest friends still live here and some of my cousins too so I have great company. I will consider moving closer to

my immediate family in Perth when the time comes for health reasons. I've had a very interesting life and I am proud of my achievements and involvements with the Shark Bay community. I was a councillor on the Shark Bay Shire for two years and am also one of the founding members of the Yadgalah Aboriginal Corporation where I have held positions of President and Director at various times since 1984. I am still a member today.

I enjoy travelling and have been privileged to travel to the Northern Territory, Alice Springs, most parts of WA (both coastal and inland) and overseas to Singapore, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Sweden and Norway. I am currently writing my second book which will be based on my four uncles who are all from Grandma Ruby's side of the family. They were all enlisted to go to war in the early 1940's. One of my dear Uncles- Uncle Harold- never came home. He was killed during the war and is buried in Lae in New Guinea, a long way from his Country and home. I want to tell my uncles' story because they are a big part of my family's history.

I feel blessed to live in this beautiful heritage listed region of the world. I have so much respect and admiration for my ancestors who faced such adversity in their time, from the pearling era in the 1950's to the challenges of the fishing and sandalwood industries, or working on the stations away from their families. They were all hardworking, respectable citizens who stood tall and faced any hardship that they encountered. Racism was never an issue as the white and coloured people respected each other and always shared the workload. I am proud of my heritage as a Malgana saltwater person.



WULA GUDA NYINDA ECO ADVENTURES

ORGANISATION NAME:

Wula Guda Nyinda Eco Adventures

CONTACT PERSON:

Darren "Capes" Capewell

EMAIL AND WEBSITE:

<http://www.wulaguda.com.au/>

KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:

Capes, Mira

KEY WORDS:

Culture, Country, eco-tourism, heritage, knowledge, history, friendships, adventures



About the storyteller...

Darren "Capes" Capewell is a descendant of the Nhandu and Malgana people who comes from Shark Bay. He is a passionate cultural advocate and a strong mentor and role model for his people.

About Wula Guda Nyinda Eco Adventures...

Wula Guda Nyinda is an Eco Adventure Tourism Company owned and operated by "Capes" whose tours aim to foster an understanding of the natural land, wildlife, stories and traditions of the region. Wula Guda Nyinda translates to 'you come this way', a traditional Aboriginal term for the sharing of stories – both between generations and between cultures. This notion of intercultural sharing extends into every aspect of the tours, which operate under the philosophy of education, understanding and respect.



All photos by: Wula Guda Nyinda Eco Adventures

Once upon a time...

when I was younger, I went down to Perth to play football because that's all I wanted to do. I used to walk around as a kid with a footy in my hand and wait for the men to knock off work so that someone would come and have a kick with me. Then I left Shark Bay and went to Carnarvon for about five years to play footy and then headed to Perth and played with The East Fremantle Football Club for a while. I then played with The Fremantle Football Club when they first started and then went back to East Fremantle before heading home to Shark Bay in 2000.

When I came home – (for all the mob from here - it's not if you're going to come home, it's when you're going to come home) – after high school, I worked in the fish factory for a while. A lot more of our people

would be living in Shark Bay if there were more employment opportunities. Tourism is the primary industry now but before it was the net fishing industry. We've all spent time working with our uncles, fathers and grandfathers as net fishermen at certain stages of our lives. I've always been fascinated with the environment and I loved my culture growing up. So those two things naturally merged together for me. I always thought about getting involved in tourism and my nephew was conducting bushwalks at Monkey Mia back in 2000 and when he was finishing up, I had a yarn to him and I said I'd like to start a tourism business, so I moved to Monkey Mia.

I didn't know anything about tourism but I knew about my culture and respect for Country and that was a perfect fit for me so I registered my business Wula Guda Nyinda Aboriginal Cultural Tours. I later renamed it Wula Guda Nyinda Eco Adventures which means "You come this way". When I first started thinking of what to name my business, I wanted it to mean something, so this name describes the process of what's happening, the journey that we take

people on. It's looking at Country from an Aboriginal perspective, from the inside looking out, not from the outside looking in. Our traditional name for Shark Bay is Gutharraguda, which means Two Waters. That refers to the two bays that dominate the landscape. The Western Gulf is called Wadandu and the Eastern Gulf where Monkey Mia is situated is called Gagarla; they are the two bays. The Aboriginal people in this region are Nhanda and Malgana people. We are very similar to a lot of the other mob on the coast, including the mob on the Dampier Peninsular, we are saltwater people and the landscape is quite similar. The defining markers of this landscape are the red sand from the desert which meets the pristine turquoise ocean.

There are two strong energies. Gutharraguda is the furthest western point of Australia, so you have the four points on the compass, each a very powerful place and this is one of them. We've got the spirit of the desert and the spirit of the saltwater but it is also where north and south meet, so we live in two climate zones.



And then one day...

I did a couple of trial runs with family which gave me the confidence to push on with it even though I had no idea where it would take me. All I knew was that it made me feel good and it made my spirit feel good. We started doing two hour bushwalks in the morning and offering half day and full day kayak tours. After a while I branched into 4WD tours. I operated out of Monkey Mia from 2004 to 2011 and then I moved back to Shark Bay. We were given some funding but we paid that back in 18 months and everything we've earned since then has been pumped back into the business. I recently bought six kayaks and several swags to facilitate our overnight tours as well. We are now in the 10th year of our eco-tourism business. The philosophy behind the business is to introduce people to Shark Bay from an Aboriginal point of view and educate them about our culture and Country.

A lot of our visitors who come here, they see the landscape but don't really connect to the Country, they don't really feel it as they don't know how to say hello to nature or reconnect to the planet so they



Getting ready for a kayak tour!

go away empty. We teach people how to say hello to Country, and make people understand it's not just a pretty place but has a lot of strong energy. Aboriginal culture is the oldest living culture on the planet today; our people have been here for 20,000 years in this part of Australia. We want non Aboriginal people to recognise this connection as well; I talk about waking up Country, and it's not just about Aboriginal people being involved in that process.

When we take people on Country, whether they fill their lungs with fresh air, or say hello to the red or white sand or to the saltwater, it all comes back to understanding the interconnectedness between us and the landscape that sustains us. So when people go home from this experience, they're not an empty vessel. They might come here not being an empty vessel but they're not a full vessel, so when they leave here they're a bit fuller. They can take that message away and share it with other people.

And because of that...

I've now been operating in Shark Bay for the last three years and offering bushwalking, kayaking and 4WD adventures travelling to South Peron, Francois Peron National Park and all throughout the Shark Bay region including: Cape Rose Cliffs, Herald Bight, Skipjack Point, Cape Peron, Bottle Bay, Gregories. Our more extended tours provide the opportunity to see the Wild West including: the breathtaking views from the Zuytdorp Cliffs and the magnificent Dirk Hartog Island, Steep Point and the amazing blowholes

We also offer overnight camping safari's which include driving down rugged tracks, kayaking across sheltered bays, landing on deserted beaches and swimming amidst magnificent coral reefs teeming with amazing marine life. We catch and cook seafood on an open campfire and listen to the ancient sounds of the didgeridoo under a starlit sky. We are immersed in the landscape's natural beauty and appreciate the Wula Guda Nyinda teachings of the profound relationship between nature and humankind.

We spend time discovering traditional bush tucker, medicinal plants and learning about animal tracking techniques. We share sacred stories, legends and traditions that have built the strong cultural history of the world heritage listed Shark Bay.

(Source: www.wulaguda.com.au).



Capes with a visitor

at False Entrance. Our bushwalking tours cater to all ages and like all our tours, aim to introduce visitors to the Shark Bay World Heritage Area. We offer a didgeridoo Dreaming Night Tour which is an adventure under the stars and we sit around a campfire and enjoy fresh seafood or bush tucker cooked on the open campfire.



“The philosophy behind the business is to introduce people to Shark Bay from an Aboriginal point of view and educate them about our culture and Country.”

We work closely with Yadgalah Aboriginal Corporation and the business is based on three important principles that we use to guide us, they are called the EUR principles; E is for education, U is for understanding and R is for respect. All of our tours are based on the journeys that our old people would take; we always finish where we start and we always come back to Country. It doesn't matter if you're a whitefella or a blackfella or a young or old man or a woman, or from overseas, everyone has a connection to Country- it just needs to be woken up. So that's the principle and philosophy behind Wula Guda Nyinda.

And since that day...

we are now running a successful business and have attracted national and international media coverage including articles in travel magazines and national newspapers. However, we have long term plans in place for the future. The next step is to focus on employing Aboriginal people in the business. Last year I did a presentation at the Indigenous Business Enterprise Communities Conference (IBEC) at UWA in Perth.



My presentation was about diversification; looking at your markets, understanding where your clientele are coming from and looking at key branding initiatives with federal, national and international campaigns. My business wouldn't be what it is today without the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council (WAITOC). I have been a board member of WAITOC since their inception. WAITOC has opened many doors for me in terms of exposure of my product, both here and internationally and they have also assisted me to create products that will appeal to our visitors. I have also been on roadshows in Europe to promote my product. We have recently branched into youth leadership and we take young people on camps. We are also working with school groups in remote areas through the football academies.

My business is caring for culture and caring for Country, I'm not motivated by money. I'm fiercely proud of my Aboriginal culture and heritage and that's what business is for me. In regards to dollars and cents, I still have trouble pricing my product and I know it is an essential aspect of running a business so I have enlisted some help. Wula Guda Nyinda has been selected to be involved in the Tourism Champions Program, through Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) and Tourism Australia who provide marketing assistance. Their role is to assist businesses to generate more income and to become sustainable.

The universe has been kind to me; it's put a person who has a business degree on my path, who is now my partner. Mira takes care of the administration and financial management for the business. It's taken me over 40 years to find my calling and I really believe it's all about timing. I've met some amazing people along the way and I know I will continue to meet many more amazing people through my life's work.



Capes



The view is better from the top of the troopy!

"When we take people on Country, whether they fill their lungs with fresh air, or say hello to the red or white sand or to the saltwater, it all comes back to understanding the interconnectedness between us and the landscape that sustains us."

JIMMY POLAND: MEMORIES OF SHARK BAY

CONTACT PERSON:

Jimmy Poland

KEY WORDS:

History, culture, art, memories, Shark Bay

About the storyteller...

Jimmy Poland is a Malgana Elder from Shark Bay who was born in 1927 in Denham and has lived his entire life in the Bay with his extended family.



Memories of Shark Bay by Jimmy Poland

I was born in Denham in 1927. When I was a young fella I worked on the fishing boats in Shark Bay from 1941-1947. This place has changed from when I was here years ago. You couldn't walk on the main street with bare feet, because they used to put shell everywhere and it hurt your feet. They used to open the shell on the beach, and you couldn't walk on it until a truck came along and cracked it up a bit. We had a proper school here; it used to be up where the hall is now.

We had fresh water, no electricity or running water but we had rain water and well water. There used to be camels in town and the camels used to go out to cart the wood for the fire as we had no gas. Our family owned a little cart. I used to go with the little cart and get small wood and sell the small wood to the people in town if they needed wood to start their fires in the mornings.

We didn't have any nurses or sisters or Silverchain in those days. My two grandmothers and my aunty delivered me. These three ladies used to deliver all the babies here in Denham. My eldest brother who has been dead two years now, he was born in Carnarvon, as was my sister. My sister is still alive and she's here in Denham.



Jimmy Poland

During the second world war, this big American flame boat came up to Shark Bay, and the chap we were fishing with said to me one morning, "This big flame boat is coming up tomorrow with a couple of generals on it and I want you to take them out fishing." So this big flame boat came in with three generals, and two operators on board.

So I gave one of the generals a line but he didn't know what to do with it, so I said, "You've got to draw the line and put the bait on the hook and throw it out". So I did it for him and I threw it out and gave the line length and he pulled in a big snapper! I took the fish off for him and put it in the tub and put bait on the hook and threw it out for him again, and he must have caught about a dozen fish. Not bad for a first time fishing expedition!

In Monkey Mia in the late 1950's, I was the first person to tame the famous Monkey Mia dolphins. A lady came up from Mandurah-her name was Mem Watts. Her husband Jack was fishing at Monkey Mia, and they would feed the dolphins. Mem would come out on the boat and feed them while we were fishing. We used to pull the boats up on the bank when the tide went out to clean the fish.



Jimmy working on a boab carving



One day when we were cleaning the boats, we saw the dolphins come into shore quite close to the beach. Later on this chap got a lease from the Shire to develop a caravan park, and the Sunday Times newspaper heard about it and they came up from Perth to do a story on it. They also approached Mem about the dolphins and she gave them a big story about how she fed the dolphins and tamed them and named one of them Charlie.

I actually named the dolphin Charlie because we had a fisherman with us and his name was Charlie Mitchell, and we caught this dolphin and I said to him, "We should name this dolphin, call him something" and they answered, "Call him Charlie after me".

I owned three boats in my time. The first boat I bought was in 1941 from the Royal Perth Yacht Club for my granddaughter. I went with a friend of mine who was also going to buy a boat. There were three boats there and he said, "So which one would you buy?" And I said, "This little boat here, that's a nice little boat" so he bought the boat for leisure, not for serious fishing and when he left Shark Bay, he sold it and another chap bought it, which I ended up buying!

When I retired in 1950, I went to Perth to have a leg operation and have a new knee put in because I could hardly walk. My dad used to do a bit of carving, pearl shell work and carving boab nuts and emu eggs, so when I finished fishing I did the same.

This lady called Sarah Watts used to work in the arts and crafts business in Carnarvon. She would come down to Denham and Darren Capewell (Capes) who runs Wula Guda Nyinda Eco Adventures said, "I'll take you out to meet Jimmy; he does a lot of pearl shell carving and art work". So he brought her around to my place and she said to me we should take you to Exmouth, where they are holding an exhibition in a couple of weeks so you can exhibit some of your work. So we did, and my work was displayed at the exhibition for two years in a row which was a proud moment in my life.

When Sarah got transferred to Perth, she asked me to call her when I was next in town as she had a lady who she wanted me to meet who worked in jewellery design and arts and craft who had seen some of my work. So I went and met her and the first thing she said to me was, "You and I should work together and we can put our artwork in an exhibition." I didn't think anything would happen, I thought it might just be talk, but a couple of weeks later, they brought me a contract to sign. I agreed to work with her for 12 months starting in 2011.

The agreement was that she would fly me to Perth four times over a 12 month period and then she and I would work together in Shark Bay for four days at a time in the shed. So over the next 12 months we did this and in 2013 she said to me, "I want you to come to Perth at the end of the week to help pack all our gear up for an exhibition in Denham." So they brought it all up here and we had a big night in the Discovery Centre. Sarah spent two weeks in Shark Bay and we also took the exhibition to Carnarvon, Port Hedland and back to Perth.



I have two sons; that's all. That was enough, they are worse than two daughters! One of my boys is working with my sister's son. My eldest son is in Perth having an operation for cancer on his lungs. They've been treating him now for six months trying to burn it out. They seem to think it's on the edge of his lungs which is good because they can cut it out so we are hoping for the best.

My jewellery and boab nuts are still displayed in the Discovery Centre and you can buy them. I've had a good life. I've been lucky to travel. I've been to Bali twice and to Bunbury, Albany, Darwin, Broome, the Gold Coast, Cairns and Sydney. I've also been on a boat called the Pacific Sun on a ten day trip, which I enjoyed very much. Life is good in the Bay.

When I was younger I was living with a girl for about 15 years and we got married, but we've been separated now for 31 years. I've been on my own for 31 years. I'm 87 years old now. My last birthday was November 30th. The doctor told me that spending time with the younger generation once I retired has kept me young as it has kept my mind occupied. Also, I've kept my mind occupied everyday by keeping busy with my boab carving.



Jimmy's art work

YADGALAH: THE ONESIE CLUB

ORGANISATION NAME:

Yadgalah Aboriginal Corporation Inc.

CONTACT PERSON:

Debbie Bellottie

EMAIL AND WEBSITE:

yadgalah@bigpond.com

KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:

Keith Capewell, Ben Bellottie

KEY WORDS:

Community, self-sufficiency, family, friendships

About the storytellers...

Keith Capewell, Ben Bellottie and Debbie Bellottie are all local Aboriginal people from Shark Bay. Keith Capewell is a Yadgalah Member and a Councillor at Denham Shire Council. Benny Bellottie is a Yadgalah Member and sits on the board of the Gascoyne Development Commission and the World Heritage Committee. Debbie Bellottie is a Yadgalah Member and runs the administration for the organisation.

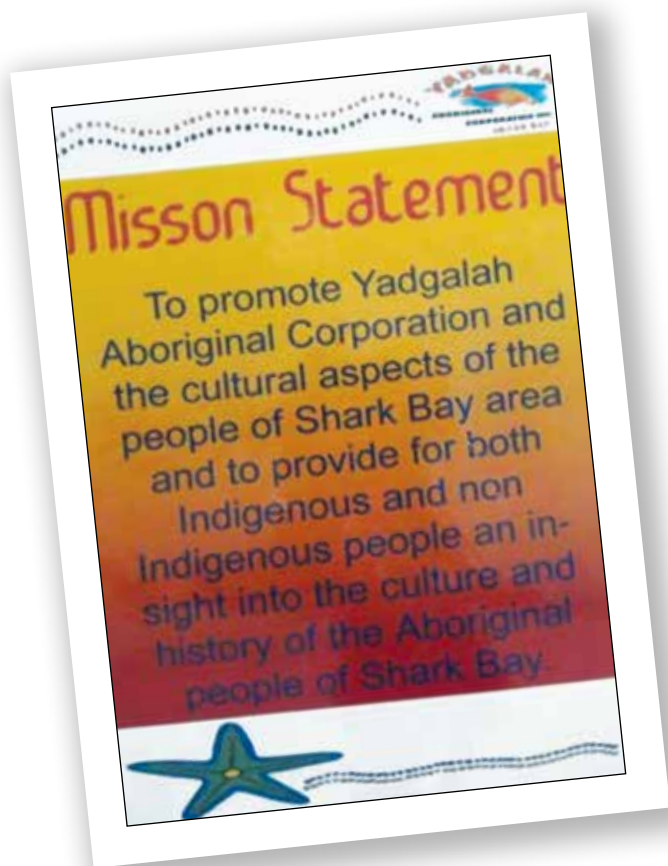
About Yadgalah Aboriginal Corporation...

Yadgalah Aboriginal Corporation is a non for profit organisation which endeavours to promote culture and provide an insight into the culture and history of the Aboriginal people of Shark Bay for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

that they needed to be an incorporated body in order to secure government grants. Fast forward several years and many things have changed. Yadgalah is no longer exclusively a women's organisation rather a community organisation run by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people. It is membership based and exclusive to the people who live and reside in the boundaries of Shark Bay. In order to be a club member you have to have lived in the town for three months before you can apply via an application process and \$5 membership fee. We have 50 members who are living in Shark Bay and 10 associate members.

And then one day...

several years ago when Ben Bellottie was on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) Regional Council, he was approached by Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) to go into partnership on the Monkey Mia Resort. IBA didn't want to get involved with native title groups in the region because of the complexity surrounding the processes and as we were the only Aboriginal group in the Shark Bay region, they thought we would be a good fit. So, after several consultations we decided it was a viable opportunity for Yadgalah and we invested in shares in Monkey Mia Resort in partnership



Once upon a time...

thirty years ago, a group of local Aboriginal Shark Bay (Gutharragudu) ladies started an Aboriginal Corporation and called it Yadgalah. Initially it was to be a Community group to represent Shark Bay Aboriginal people. They named the organisation Yadgalah as it means 'friends' in Malgana. Back then it was predominately a social group and the women would organise and run events in town. In those early days, the Aboriginal people didn't have a lot of money to run the corporation until they realised

with IBA. The majority of the hard work on behalf of Yadgalah was done by Val Pricebeck and Bruce Brideoake who were employed by IBA at the time. They set up the contracts, dealt with the lawyers and ensured the whole process went extremely smoothly. Once negotiations were finalised we owned 23 per cent of Monkey Mia Resort. IBA had 26 per cent and Monkey Mia had a controlling share of 51 per cent. This investment took our organisation to a whole new level, we were able to expand Yadgalah and thus provide more opportunities for our community overall.

One of the best results of the decision to become involved with Monkey Mia was the many employment opportunities it created for our people through the resort itself, specifically through hospitality traineeships which several of our local girls completed. We were involved with Monkey Mia for around six years all together but four years ago Monkey Mia actually decided they wanted to sell their share. IBA then asked if we wanted the full share which would see us own 50 per cent each. At this point, the resort was in need of quite a bit of work and maintenance so we had to make a decision. As Monkey Mia is a stand-alone resort and we were responsible for supplying water, electricity, sewerage and all maintenance, it was very costly and any profits were just going straight back into the resort. Further to that, if we wanted to stay in partnership it would mean we'd have to borrow more money, get further into debt and not see any returns for the next decade. So, we decided to sell our share which in the end was a smart decision as we walked away with a lot more than we went in with.

And because of that...

we own a large block of land that the office sits on and we've since built a new office which is a facility we have been working towards for a long time. The ladies came up with the colour scheme; the roof is the colour of the clouds, the wall is the ocean colours and the floor is the sand. We also own a transportable building to run our mini golf business and the shed next to the transportable which came with the land also belongs to Yadgalah. We hire out the shed to local organisations for functions. We also own two houses which we rent out to club members. There are many benefits for members of Yadgalah. For example, we have the white goods program and any members who want to buy white goods up to the value of \$1500 can secure an interest free loan through the club. It is a service



Our award for our role in the dugong tagging program

that is used by many of our members, as long as they are a financial member of the club. At the end of the year we put on a Christmas dinner which is paid for by the organisation. As Shark Bay is pretty transient, members do move away for periods of time. Although we like to keep family members who were brought up here on as members, when they move away, they hand in their memberships until they return.

Yadgalah Aboriginal Corporation is now referred to as the Onesie Club because there is only one Aboriginal organisation in Shark Bay with one native title claim for the region, one road in and one road out! The dugong, rather than the dolphin, is our emblem. We decided the dugong was more culturally fitting because Wuthagas are an essential element of Aboriginal people's living maritime culture. We were also involved in the Dugong tagging program with the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) and we won both the state and the national award for our work on this program. We sent Brendan Bellottie and Kim Poland who worked on the program over to Canberra to receive the awards which was brilliant. They did interviews with ABC radio and it was an exciting and rewarding experience for them and a credit to the whole Shark Bay Community.



*Ben Bellottie, Debbie Bellottie,
Keith Capewell*

The club is financially sound and self-sufficient and we don't owe anyone any money. Enterprise is our best way forward to protect our culture, and in this modern world you need money to preserve culture and that's the way the Yadgalah Club has always thought, so we were lucky IBA and Monkey Mia came along to provide us with opportunities. We don't rely on Government grants to run our business; the only Government funding we receive is a local Shire grant once a year to run our hugely popular NAIDOC event. We work closely with the local school to ensure this event is fun and successful. Over the weekend we hold a flag raising ceremony and morning tea with the school kids and teachers and we have a big cook up with traditional cuisine; kangaroo, dugong and turtle.

This cook up is held in our shed and we also set up a big marquee with entertainment. Last year Mary G from Broome performed and we also brought in a DJ from Carnarvon. The Grey Nomads absolutely love the cook up and often make up the largest number of guests. This event is really great for the people of Shark Bay as they get to meet new people and the travellers get to interact with locals. Everyone loves it; we only charge \$25 for the tickets which includes food and entertainment and we usually have around 200 people turn up which is great. We also run a football match between Kalbarri and Shark Bay during NAIDOC which is a lot of fun. We have now been running this popular event for the past ten years.

And since that day...

last year we celebrated our 30 year anniversary. We combined the celebrations with our NAIDOC event. For 30 years we have been and still are the only Aboriginal organisation in Shark Bay. We have



"Yadgalah Aboriginal Corporation is now referred to as the Onesie Club because there is only one Aboriginal organisation in Shark Bay with one native title claim for the region, one road in and one road out!"

many plans in the pipeline. We are in the process of writing a business plan for the future direction of the club. We own some vacant land that we would like to develop into facilities to cater for several training opportunities we have identified. We'd like to get a training program up and running for our youth, predominately school leavers, to prepare them for the mainstream workforce.

Outside of Yadgalah but very much connected to our livelihood, is the work we do to ensure the survival of our culture. Ben sits on the World Heritage Council and is a Shire Councillor, along with Keith. Darren, who is a member of our family and of the club, is now on the board of the Yamaji Land and Sea Council. The World Heritage Council has an Indigenous network throughout Australia so it's imperative to be involved in this organisation. We enjoy our lives in Shark Bay and our main goal is to protect our lifestyle for our community and for future generations. We will do this until someone comes along who wants to step up; at this point our young people are not leaders, so we need to identify those leaders in our community.

Shark Bay is a unique place; we were brought up the European way to be self-sufficient and to work hard. In the past there were 10 to 12 professional fishing licences which were all owned and operated by Aboriginal people with the exception of two. They were set up by our grandparents and have provided ongoing employment for their families through several generations. We've always held our own here in Shark Bay as a group; back when we were at school the only non-Indigenous people were the policemen and the school teachers. Each Indigenous family in Shark Bay has around 12 to 13 family members and that core group of people still stick together today. We call ourselves the real Shark Bay people and we are proud of our strength as a group and our heritage.

*Have you
got a great
story?*

*Would you like
to contribute to the
next Indigenous
Storybook?*

*If so, contact PHAIWA on;
(08) 9266 2344 or
email: phaiwa@curtin.edu.au*

*For more information
on the Storybook, including
framework and guidelines visit
the Indigenous Storybook
webpage at:*

<http://www.phaiwa.org.au/index.php/other-projects-mainmenu-146/308-indigenous-storybook>

*Stories from all over
Western Australia are welcome
and encouraged.*



THE WEST AUSTRALIAN
INDIGENOUS
STORYBOOK

