



# THE WEST AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS STORYBOOK



CELEBRATING & SHARING  
GOOD NEWS STORIES  
The Mid-West / Pilbara Edition





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### Acknowledgements

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- 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.

### Cover Photo - Photo Credit Juli Coffin

Glen Herring Gorge is a significant place for food, water and shelter for the Kariara people and their descendants of the Pilbara. It is named Kujinpin and is a fresh water source all year around, offering shelter, vegetation and food sources. It has been utilised by Aboriginal peoples for many years and has, in more recent years, been a popular tourist attraction.

PHAIWA would like to acknowledge and thank Elder Nanna Molly Dann (nee Todd) and Aunty Patricia Mason (spokesperson for Kariara/Todd family) for the photo information.

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Welcome to the third edition of the WA Indigenous Storybook which focuses on the Pilbara and Mid-West regions. We have received some really positive feedback about this series of books; not because they are nice to look at and easy to read, but more because they focus on real-life, positive stories and illustrate how Indigenous people and projects really are making a difference to the lives of the people in their communities.

The Public Health Advocacy Institute of WA (PHAIWA) is very proud to be associated with the authors and contributors acknowledged in this Storybook. We very much enjoy working with these Indigenous practitioners and community members to tease out the background to each story and how they established there was a need in their community to warrant the intervention that is described in each story. By nature, many Aboriginal people are shy and don't really like talking about themselves, so sometimes this process can be lengthy and take quite a few visits and some negotiation! However, it is this very shyness which makes these Storybooks so necessary. Without these stories, it would be even more difficult for communities to gain the support and recognition needed to address the social, health and environmental issues at the local level. As with the initial two books, this edition includes a diverse range of topics and for the time, has included a story that describes the use of information technology (in this case, an App) to address cultural and heritage issues. Other stories address leadership, environmental health, community gardens and employment, the importance of language and there is even a story about Hedland's Next Top Model!

PHAIWA believes that a Storybook is not only a terrific way to celebrate achievements within Indigenous communities but is also a creative way to disseminate and share information about what might work in other communities. PHAIWA hopes that after reading these stories, other Indigenous organisations, communities or individuals will be motivated and stimulated to tailor or replicate the ideas within their own spheres of influence. All stories include the contact details for the storytellers and their organisations, and we encourage you to contact them if their story might make a difference in your community. A final Storybook is planned for 2013 – so this could be your last chance to contribute your story! PHAIWA welcomes all stories that focus on Indigenous 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](http://www.phaiwa.org.au)

## ABOUT THE MARTU PEOPLES...

- The Martu are an Australian Aboriginal people of the Western Desert. Their lands include the Percival Lakes and Pilbara regions in Western Australia. They traditionally occupied a large tract of land; their neighbours to the east are the Pintupi.
  - Martu language groups include Manyjilyjarra; Kartujarra; Kiyajarra; Putijarra; Nyiyaparli; Warnman; Ngulipartu; Pitjikala; Kurajarra; Jiwaliny; Mangala; and Nangajarra.
  - Martu means 'one of us', or 'person'. Traditional Martu language is called Martu Wangka, a Western Desert Language. The majority of Martu are bilingual with English as their second language.
  - Today, approximately 2500 Martu live in and around their determination area including within their established communities at Jigalong, Punmu, Parnngurr (Cotton Creek) and Kunawarrtji.
- <sup>1</sup> The Bundiyarra Aboriginal Community Aboriginal Corporation

## ABOUT THE WAJARRI PEOPLES...

- Wajarri is the language spoken by the people who live/lived along the Murchison River.
  - Wajarri country is inland from Geraldton, Western Australia and extends as far south and west as Mullewa, north to Gascoyne Junction and Mt Augustus and east to Meekatharra.
  - There are seven known dialect of Wajarri: Birdungu Wajarri; Byro Wajarri; Mileura Wajarri; Ngunuru Wajarri; Nharnu Wajarri; Nhugarn Wajarri and Southern Wajarri.
  - The Murchison and Sandford rivers, creek beds and waterholes are outstanding features for the Wajarri- today many Wajarri still retain strong connection to their barna (land).
  - Many Wajarri enjoy time hunting, collecting and still eat traditional food and visiting/caring for their country.
- <sup>1</sup> wdlac. western desert lands aboriginal corporation (Jamukurnu-Yapalikunu) <http://www.wdlac.com.au/>

## ABOUT THE PILBARA

- The Region covers a total area of 507,896 sq kms (including offshore islands).
- The residential population for the Pilbara in 2012 was 62,736 people.
- Most of the inhabitants are located in the western third, whereas the eastern third is largely desert with few inhabitants. The region has four local government areas - the Shires of Ashburton, East Pilbara, Roebourne and the Town of Port Hedland.
- The major towns of the region are Port Hedland and Karratha. Other towns are Roebourne, Dampier, Onslow, Pannawonica, Paraburdoo, Tom Price, Wickham, Newman, Marble Bar and Nullagine.
- The Pilbara came to national and international prominence during the 1960s when the go-ahead was given to extract iron ore deposits in the region. Today the Pilbara economy is crucial to the State, providing two of the State's largest export revenue earners - iron ore and liquefied natural gas.



## ABOUT THE MID-WEST

- The Mid-West region is one of the nine regions of Western Australia. It is a very sparsely populated region located on the west coast of Western Australia, extending about 200 km north and south of its administrative centre of Geraldton. To the east it extends more than 800 km inland to Wiluna in the Gibson Desert.
- It has a total area of 472,336 km<sup>2</sup>, and a permanent population of about 52,000 people, more than half of those in Geraldton. Geraldton is also an important hub for the tourism industry.
- The economy of the Mid-West region varies with the geography and climate. Near the coast, annual rainfall of between 400 and 500 mm allows intensive agriculture. Further inland, annual rainfall decreases to less than 250 mm, and here the economy is dominated by mining of gold, nickel and other mineral resources. The Mid-West also has the highest value fishing industry in Western Australia.

# WELCOME TO COUNTRY ..THE SMARTPHONE APP.



## ORGANISATIONS NAME:

Weeriana Street Media

## CONTACT PERSON:

Tyson Mowarin

## EMAIL AND WEBSITE:

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## PROGRAM / PROJECT PARTNERS:

Woodside

## KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:

Tyson Mowarin, Robyn Marais, Cavell Schipp

## KEY WORDS:

History, culture, education, knowledge, digital media

## About the storyteller...

Tyson Mowarin is the Creative Director of Weeriana Street Media in Roebourne.

## About Weeriana Street Media...

Weeriana Street Media is a proud Australian Indigenous media company based in Roebourne in the Pilbara region of Western Australia. Weeriana Street Media is currently producing the Digital Dreamtime Project which is a series of 13 projects across three years.



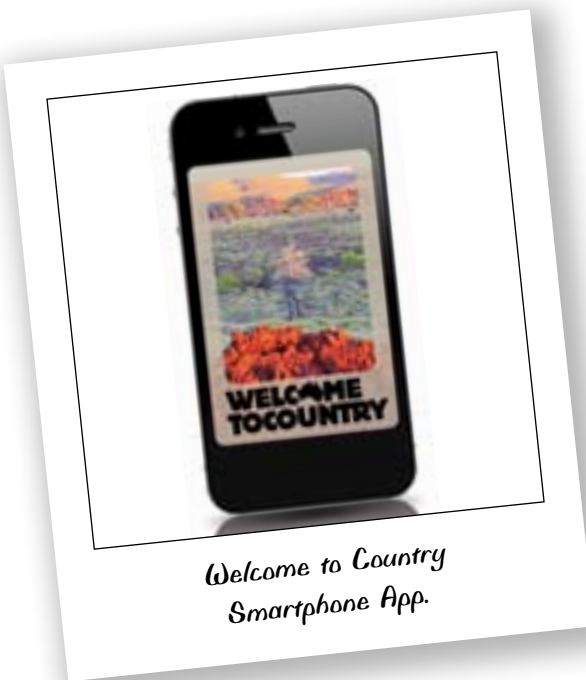
WEERIANNASTREETMEDIA

## Once upon a time...

while I was working in construction in the Pilbara region and in Queensland, I found I was turning up for work but I had no passion for what I was doing. During this period, I also happened to do some work with Juluwarlu Aboriginal Corporation helping on a media project out on country and from then on I was completely hooked and I knew I had to make a change! I knew I wanted to combine my love of documenting stories and my desire to stay connected to my culture, country and history. What better way to do this than to start my own company! So in 2007, I started a digital media company as a part-time sole trader and Weeriana Street Media was born. That was six years ago. But I feel as though I haven't really worked in the last six years, because you can't call it 'work' if you love what you do!

## And then one day...

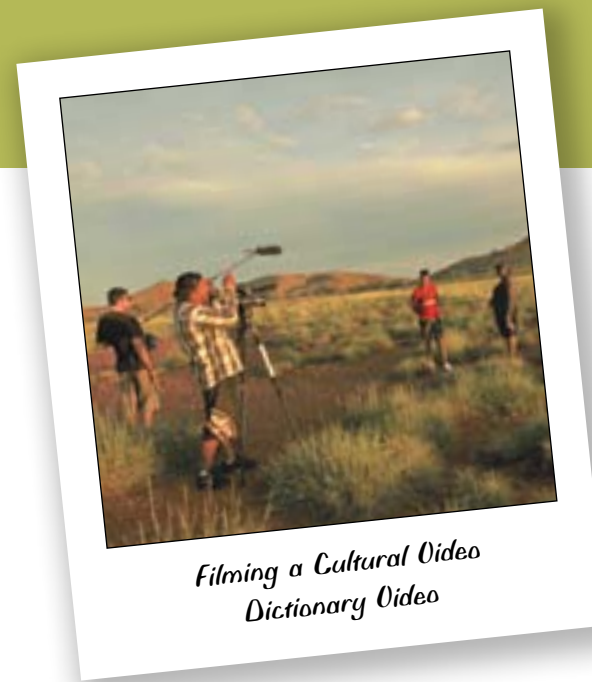
last year in June, Woodside Rock Art Foundation provided some major sponsorship which enabled me to take the business to the next level and operate fulltime. I brought a Digital Communication Strategist up from Perth named Simon Te Brinke to work with me. Simon has been helping me develop the Digital Dreamtime Project which is a series of 13 projects we are producing over three years.



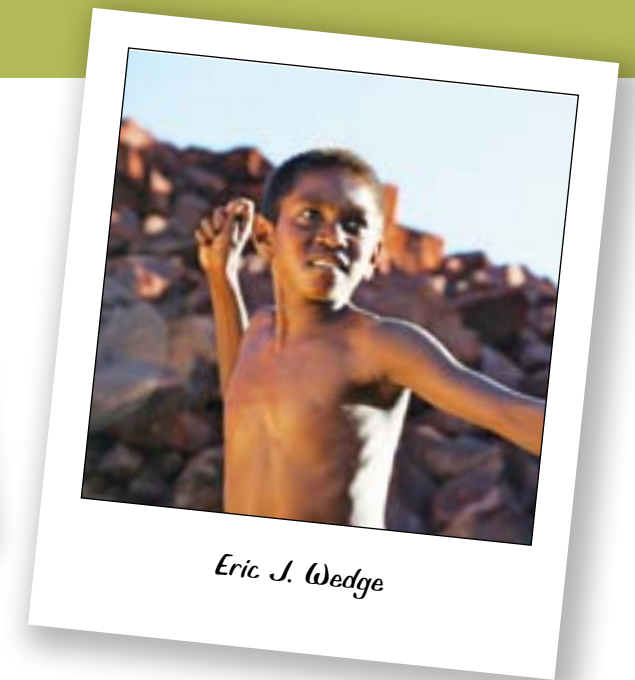
*Welcome to Country  
Smartphone App.*

One of the first things we did was to develop a website called [www.iCampfire.tv](http://www.iCampfire.tv) which is the main hub of the Digital Dreamtime project. The website was established as a way to share Indigenous culture with people.

At the moment, we are getting ready to launch the social network profile on the website so people from across Australia can become members, connect with one another and upload audio/video, photos and links to share information and stories. We like to think of it as a living breathing archive of Aboriginal Culture and History.



*Filming a Cultural Video  
Dictionary Video*



*Eric J. Wedge*

The Digital Dreamtime Projects are all integrated and use the same content from the website. One of the projects we are currently developing is a video governance game demonstrating the traditional names that we use in our family structures.

I have employed two full time staff in the last six months; our producer Robyn Marais and our film editor, Cavell Schipp. They are a great acquisition to the company and having them on board allows me to be creative, develop the ideas and focus on filming; the stuff I'm best at doing and enjoy the most. We are also currently looking to employ several local people as production assistants in both a full time and part time capacity.

## And because of that...

one of the most exciting projects we are developing right now is the Welcome to Country iPhone application (now referred to as App.). Welcoming people to Country is a tradition that Indigenous people do for visitors to their country. It's a simple concept; if you happen to travel into Ngarluma country here in the Pilbara and you have the App. on your smartphone, it will alert you that you have just arrived on Ngarluma country and notify you that a traditional Welcome to Country video (from Elders or knowledge carriers in the area that you are in) is available to watch. The video provides the viewer with information about cultural knowledge, language lessons, keeping safe, local protocols, tribal boundaries, skin names, local flora and fauna and more.

You will also have access to the website through the App., so if you upload something from the website and you tag it with the word Ngarluma then the smartphone App. will automatically link the two.

When you go to the next door neighbours country or you go on a plane and land somewhere else in Australia, you'll get that experience again because you'll be welcomed into someone else's country.

The Welcome to Country smartphone App. will be the first of its kind in Australia. We describe it as "a virtual experience of Australian Aboriginal culture, history and heritage blended with today's cutting edge technology". I came up with the idea because I always liked how Indigenous people welcome one another to country and acknowledge the visitor is in an area they are not familiar with. These days that tradition is practised at events right across Australia, whether a big award ceremony or a local club function or concert.

More and more, non-Indigenous Australians are acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the area they are in. I like to use the story of when Kevin Rudd was the Prime Minister. He was able to greet the local people in Mandarin at the foot of the Great Wall of China but he couldn't say hello to the local people at the base of Uluru! He can speak Mandarin but he can't speak any Australian Indigenous languages. To me, this illustrates the need for more education about Indigenous culture. I thought the Welcome to Country App. would be a good way to share a significant aspect of our tradition.





# HOW ROSES GREW AN ORGANISATION: THE STORY OF MEEDAC



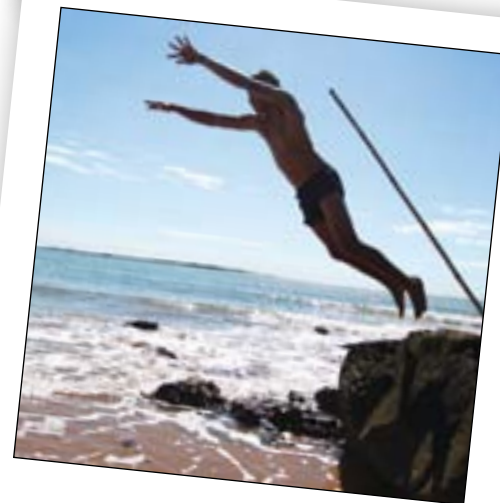
*Tyson Mowarin and Cavell Schipp  
filming out at Croydon Station near  
Roebourne*

At present records and historical information about our parents and grandparents is really hard to access and that needs to change. Traditional and historical knowledge should not be a sleeping archive. The iCampfire.tv website is a cultural archive that people will be able to use today and in a 100 years' time. It would be fantastic if people all across Australia became members.

*"To join up and get more  
information go the website":  
<http://www.icampfire.tv/>*



*Filming the Ngarluma  
Elders Project*



*Duncan Aubrey*

## And since that day...

we have recently developed a light prototype for the App. for the local area and then we'll start distributing it through iTunes in March 2013. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) has expressed interest in forming a partnership with Weerianna Street Media for this particular project and if so, their role will be in distribution. My hope is that the App. will eventually be used Australia wide.

My ultimate goal for the iCampfire.tv website is to share Indigenous culture with everyone. Although it's a social networking site where people can join to document and share their content and stories, I don't see it as a social network as such. To me, it's my living, breathing archive of culture and history which just happens to have a social network - not the other way around. The idea is to take Indigenous history and culture and put it into a contemporary format so it is accessible to everyone and it stays alive. I am trying to bring the world's oldest continuum (Australian Indigenous culture) and modern technology together to teach and educate not only our own people but wider Australia.

In addition, another project we are working on is The Ngarluma Elders project which is funded by the Ngarluma Aboriginal Corporation Trust Fund to document and preserve seven Ngarluma Elders' biographies incorporating their cultural knowledge.

I'd like to help Indigenous people firstly in the Pilbara and eventually across WA, to develop projects to document and preserve their culture and history.

## ORGANISATIONS NAME:

Mid-West Aboriginal Employment and Economic Development (MEEDAC) Incorporated

## CONTACT PERSON:

Harry Taylor

## EMAIL AND WEBSITE:

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## PROGRAM / PROJECT PARTNERS:

Job Services Australia providers, External Registered Training Organisations and Mining companies

## KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:

Harry Taylor, Anita Morrissey

## KEY WORDS:

Training, development, horticulture, health, well-being

## About Harry Taylor...

Harry Taylor is the Horticulture Project Officer at MEEDAC Holdings.

## About MEEDAC...

MEEDAC Holdings is a company that is fully owned by MEEDAC Incorporated and along with the Horticultural Company has a Building Company and an RTO within its portfolio. MEEDAC has a Committee of Management which consists of Indigenous representatives from across the Mid-West region of Western Australia and works with its management team to ensure that programs fulfil the community needs.



## Once upon a time...

back in 1997, in the farming town of Mullewa, about 100km inland from Geraldton, a group of Aboriginal people formed MEEDAC (Mid-West Aboriginal Employment and Economic Development (MEEDAC) Incorporated to run the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP). At the time, the group was concerned that an outside organisation would not understand the issues that Indigenous people faced and wanted a program that would create employment and training opportunities for local Aboriginal people in Mullewa. MEEDAC is funded by various State and Commonwealth agencies for Municipal Services, Employment and Training and Arts, however the organisation also owns other businesses that supports the employment and training of Indigenous people.

Although MEEDAC's core business is employment and training, initially a very small enterprise was established for the growing of roses. Unfortunately though, this was not successful as the climatic conditions in Mullewa, particularly in the summer months, could not sustain the project.



*Fresh produce growing in the  
MEEDAC garden*

When Harry Taylor came on board as the Horticulture Project Officer, MEEDAC realised there was an opportunity to create employment for the local people through horticulture and decided to expand the operations to incorporate vegetables, fruit and free range eggs. Earlier in 2012, we also expanded our plots to grow gerberas in the shade houses. Although the roses weren't a successful venture, we were aware that there was still a great demand within the Mid-West area for flowers, as no-one was growing them locally; they were all coming up from Perth.





*The friendly chickens*

### And then one day...

we thought we could create more employment opportunities for the local Indigenous people. The horticulture business employs about 12 local Indigenous people through the CDEP Program both male and female, to work in the gardens and tend to the flowers, fruit and vegetables. We have a diverse age range within this group. The youngest is 18 and the oldest is 50 years old. The working fortnight is 32 hours and includes a compulsory accredited training program. We sell all our produce including spring onions, lettuces, cabbages, courgettes and watermelons to name a few, either locally in Mullewa and Geraldton or Perth. We also offer a landscaping and lawn mowing service in Mullewa.



*Fresh cut flowers ready for delivery*

### And because of that...

our program is structured to ensure everyone has the opportunity to work in different areas and on different projects. The aim of the program is to train people to be as multi-skilled as possible and to enhance their job prospects once they move on from MEEDAC. The work is diverse - one week we have a crew harvesting vegetables and the following week they will mow lawns. However, we do have a core crew who work predominately on one project to ensure quality assurance. For example, all the vegetable boxes have to be stamped and marked correctly before they can be put on the trucks, and only certain staff can do that comprehensively.

Our working day begins at 8am and we spend 2 to 3 hours picking, washing and grading all the vegetables. We are fortunate to have excellent facilities here at the MEEDAC storehouse. The vegetables are packed into small, medium and large boxes and stored in the cool room. Every second day of the week, the boxes are delivered to Geraldton for transportation to Perth. Flowers and vegetables are delivered on the other days to the local shops and markets in Geraldton. Most of our bulkier vegies go to one specific shop. It is a family run business that looks after the smaller growers. We sell squash and courgettes to the Canningvale markets in Perth because we grow far too many for the Geraldton area alone.

MEEDAC are always looking to take on more projects and expand our business.

At last count, we had close to 200 chickens and we supply fresh free range eggs to the local hotel and hospital in Mullewa.



*Courgettes and zucchinis*



*Harry Taylor*



*Morris Comeagain, Eric Merritt*

Everyone enjoys working with the chickens and they are useful animals as not only do they supply fresh eggs but they eat the leaves from the old vegie plants.

MEEDAC is the only cut flower producer in the Geraldton area and we supply our flowers to five different outlets and anticipate that this will create training opportunities in floristry for some of our CDEP participants.

Our participants generally remain with us until they can find employment elsewhere in Mullewa. It is a great system as it takes the pressure off them to find another job within a certain timeframe. If a job comes up that they want to apply for, we support them through that process. If the participant has worked for MEEDAC for a long period of time, they will have completed several TAFE courses and be suitably qualified for many different jobs. We provide the necessary references which often helps their prospects of securing the position.

### And since that day...

we are very proud of our high quality products. Everyone takes a lot of pride in what they do and the results speak for themselves. The program provides many positive outcomes and social benefits. Not only does it deliver employment for local Aboriginal people but it promotes healthy living and healthy eating. As our vegetables are graded pretty strictly, we don't sell produce with scratches or marks even if they are still perfectly edible, so the staff take home fresh produce at the end of the day to share with their families. This has helped to improve their diets immensely.

We have recently finished a couple of landscaping jobs in Mullewa including one at the local fire brigade which looks really beautiful and we have received numerous compliments. Everyone was very proud of that particular project and it's pleasing to know it will be there for years to come.

The range of projects and training we do equips the staff with many skills and provides a certain level of self-confidence to tackle new things. It's a good, positive environment and an enjoyable place to work.

Just recently two of our participants found work in Mullewa. One is now the head gardener at the local Mullewa High School and one of our ladies took a position in the kitchen at the local hospital. Several other employees have secured work on mine sites. These are the sorts of outcomes we strive for and we are hopeful that our horticulture garden and other projects can continue for a long time, as the benefits to the community are immense.

*"The program provides many positive outcomes and social benefits. Not only does it deliver employment for local Aboriginal people but it promotes healthy living and healthy eating."*





# HEDLAND'S NEXT TOP MODEL



## ORGANISATIONS NAME:

Hedland's Next Top Model

## CONTACT PERSON:

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## PROGRAM / PROJECT PARTNERS:

Pilbara Community Drug Service Team, Wirraka Maya Health Service Aboriginal Corporation, Youth Involvement Council, Youth Opportunities Unlimited, Youth Connections, Pilbara Echo, Charter Hall, Town of Port Hedland, Samarah Brown, Pilbara Girl 2011 and Sharon Gosling

## KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:

Bonnie Matheson, Desiree Friend, Joanie Doran, Cheryl Morton, Josephine Bowles, Sarah Amiradaki, Ji Deeg, Happiness Mahlangu, Delany Delaney

## KEY WORDS:

Self-esteem, leadership, positive body image, respect, friendship

## About the storyteller...

Bonnie Matheson is a Health Promotion Officer in Port Hedland, specialising in youth.

## About Hedland's Next Top Model...

Hedland's Next Top Model was established in 2012 in Port Hedland to provide an opportunity for young women in the town to participate in the program which focusses on health and leadership. The program is collaboration between the Pilbara Community Drug Service Team, Wirraka Maya Health Service Aboriginal Corporation, The Youth Involvement Council, Youth Opportunities Unlimited, Youth Connections, Pilbara Echo, Charter Hall, and the Town of Port Hedland.

## Once upon a time...

I was working as a Health Promotion Officer in Port Hedland, specialising in youth and I was curious to know what activities the young girls in town could get involved in that were enjoyable and interesting. I contacted the Youth Involvement Council to talk with some young girls and fashion and modelling were frequent themes. So I decided to develop a health and wellbeing program based around these activities.

Before we knew it, 'Hedland's Next Top Model' was born. The program targets girls aged 13-18 years. It involved a series of workshops which culminated in a fashion parade, where one of the girls would be crowned with the title of Hedland's Next Top Model!

The Youth Involvement Council had noted a lot of the older girls were not using their services or participating in their programs, so we thought it was important to try to engage them in something positive.

We had no problem recruiting girls to be in the program. Ten girls from Hedland jumped at the opportunity to be involved. The next step was to identify the best person to deliver each workshop. We used a Health Promotion Officer, Drug and Alcohol Counsellor, a Sexual Health Promotion Officer, a Youth Worker and also involved local

businesses such as hairdressers to share their skills and knowledge. A transport service to collect the girls straight after school was provided to ensure they could attend the workshops for two hours once a week.

During the first workshop, we spent the session getting to know each other and found that at the start of the program quite a number of the girls were pretty shy. We tried to work through that by doing icebreaker exercises and we encouraged them to develop their own group rules including what type of behaviour they expected from themselves and one another. We also asked the girls for input on how they wanted the sessions to run and what content they wanted to cover to encourage ownership of the program.

Health promotion was integrated into all components of the program. This made the workshops educational as well as fun. Drug, alcohol and tobacco education was covered. We also discussed positive behaviours and experiences that had shaped their lives. The principle behind this was to encourage the girls to think about health and wellbeing and how to look after not only themselves but also each other. We certainly did not want to make the educational component of the workshops tedious, so we presented the content in a way that appealed to young people through drama, singing and music whilst keeping the focus on interaction and engagement.

We consistently linked each workshop to fashion and modelling. For example, we had a make-up session and photo shoot demonstrating the physical effects of drug and alcohol use. The girls made each other up with blackened eyes and yellow teeth to illustrate what the body can look like if it is not taken care of and learnt that unhealthy choices can harm our bodies inside and out.

We discussed sexual health, relationships and how to protect themselves in relationships. The girls also learnt skin and hair care and how to walk on the runway. A lot of time was invested in talking about body image and practicing to move their bodies so they would learn to feel comfortable in their own skin, before they hit the catwalk.

## And then one day...

we invited the 2011 Pilbara Girl winner, Samarah Brown, to mentor the girls. Samarah is a great Indigenous leader and proved to be a fantastic role model.

She demonstrated how to pose for the camera, taught the girls several different modelling techniques, and most importantly, worked with them to build their confidence so they would feel more comfortable within themselves.

All the girls had the opportunity to learn new many skills throughout the program. On one occasion they learnt how to make alterations to op shop clothing. So, not only did they learn how to be thrifty but they learnt some basic sewing skills too. They were also given a \$50 budget to spend at K-Mart and a time limit to shop for an outfit to wear during the fashion parade. This was a great exercise in budgeting, restraint and time management. This strategy ensured all the girls had an appropriate outfit to wear on the catwalk and was a fantastic opportunity for them to express themselves creatively. Needless to say this was one of their favourite workshops!



*Getting ready for the show*

*"It is so encouraging to witness the transformation when you give young people a platform to shine."*



Government of Western Australia  
WA Country Health Service



*Celebrating a successful night!*

# THE LANGUAGES OF THE WAJARRI



The Fashion Parade

## And since that day...

all the hard work the girls had done over ten weeks culminated in a fantastic competition at the South Hedland shopping centre. The girls were buzzing with excitement in the tent before the show and trying to contain their nerves before walking out to a crowd of around 100 people. There were many family members in the audience to support the girls. The music and choreography for the parade was selected by the girls and we had a local Aboriginal rapper, KJ perform which added another fun element to the night.

Although the girls were a bit shy at first, they really got into their stride as the night went on and when it came time to answer the judges' questions, they did so with poise. You could see they were proud of themselves and where they had come from. Everyone commented on their confidence and professionalism. The girls were so supportive of each other and there was a real sense of camaraderie and friendship amongst the group.

In keeping in with the theme of the program, we chose the winner based on personal growth and development as well as their level of commitment, rather than purely on appearance. Meisha Davis was crowned 'Hedland's Next Top Model' with Violet Jane May and Ishfa Niyaz being awarded second and third place.

The night was such a success that during the entire evening, we were thinking about how we could ensure the program continues into the future. Regularly, the girls stop me in the street to ask me when the next program is taking place. Our Health Promotion Officer in Newman has recently applied for a grant to run a similar program, so hopefully it will continue in other towns in the Pilbara. It would be great to see it run in a regional capacity too.

It is so encouraging to witness the transformation when you give young people a platform to shine. I really believe that the self-confidence and life affirming lessons the girls learnt over those ten weeks will remain with them as they continue to navigate the path of adolescence and beyond.



## And because of that...

the girls' sense of self and confidence grew exponentially during the workshops. An important aspect of the program was building leadership skills. We encouraged this by asking them to write a profile about themselves for the local paper which they did during the workshop. In the profile piece they were required to talk about what they wanted out of life, their goals and dreams and why they were doing the program. Their personal profiles were then published in the paper along with their photograph and these were displayed at the local shopping centre during the fashion show. It was important to show the community that Hedland's youth were youth they could be proud of.

Building positive relationships was something we focussed on throughout the program. This was the first time a program in Hedland included both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants, (although the majority were Aboriginal), and we were keen to build those connections and friendships in our community. We wanted to show other young people in town that no matter what their background is, they can respect and support one another.

We got the girls to write "warm and fuzzy" messages about each other throughout the program and on the last day we went to dinner to celebrate and they all read what they had written. We called the notes 'Bags of Love'. It was pretty special to see the lovely things they had written about each other.

ORGANISATIONS NAME:  
Bundiyarra Irrra Wangga Language Program

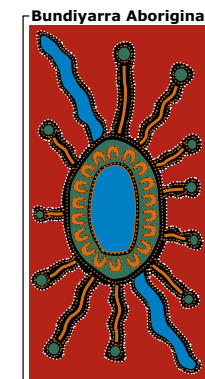
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PROGRAM / PROJECT PARTNERS:  
Yamaji Language Aboriginal Corporation,  
Department of Regional Australia, Local  
Government, Arts and Sport

KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:  
Jennifer Kniveton (Coordinator), Kathy  
Councillor, Leonie Boddington, Leann  
Merritt (Language Workers) and James Bednall  
(Linguist)

KEY WORDS:  
Language, preservation, culture, history, future  
generations



## Once upon a time...

in Geraldton in 1989, several local Aboriginal women were sitting around, and talking about how important language is to their culture. From these conversations they decided it would be a good idea to start recording and documenting some of the local languages of the area. They applied for a grant (through Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre) and started up the first language centre of the Mid-West (the Yamaji Language Aboriginal Corporation).

They employed a linguist and some language workers, and began the process of recording stories, working with Elders, and collecting important information about the languages of the Mid-West, Murchison and Gascoyne regions to make sure these languages were well preserved, and kept alive.

## About the storytellers...

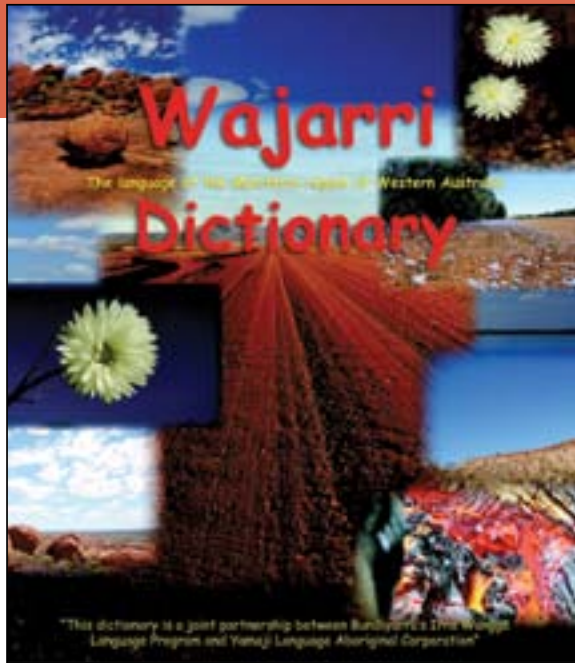
Leonie Boddington is a traditional Wajarri lady with many talents! Leonie is a dedicated family lady who is addicted to her culture. She is a Wajarri speaker and one of the main local educators of the Wajarri language within Bundiyarra. Leonie has travelled and worked extensively with many Elders and peoples to educate, restore and preserve Aboriginal language. She is the Senior Language Worker at the Language Centre.

Kathy Councillor has a strong passion for her people and community. Her past involvement working with language, events and outreach programs has been led by her desire to teach the youth of today, tomorrow and the future. Kathy says it is imperative to keep culture strong for future generations. Kathy works with the Language Program as a Language Worker and is currently working on developing the program for radio promotion.

Jennifer Kniveton (Gregory) is a local Aboriginal woman who works as the Coordinator for the Language Program. Jennifer is a passionate believer that language is the carrier of culture and revitalisation of our language is important to connect us to our identity.

ABOUT BUNDIYARRA... 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 to its members 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.





### And then one day...

after over 20 years of hard work, the first edition of the Wajarri Dictionary was printed. The Wajarri Dictionary: The Language of the Murchison Region of Western Australia was compiled by more than 100 Elders, linguists, language workers and other community members. It is the most comprehensive language resource that has been produced by the language centre, containing over 2,500 entries, as well as grammatical information about the language. The dictionary was launched on March 29 2012 on traditional Wajarri country, at Murchison Shire Settlement.

Over 200 people gathered together to celebrate this milestone including politicians, community members, community groups and schools, but the launch was mostly attended by our Elders which was so great to see. We took a couple of busloads of people to the launch, provided everyone with a good feed and a big cake. We gave speeches and handed out copies to people who had contributed to the dictionary and they all said a few words on behalf of their Elders. Having the launch on country meant a lot to those old people. We had traditional dancers perform and it was a real celebration because the Elders were just so proud to see their language in print. It was a very special day.

*"We want to hear our languages spoken by our children and grandchildren in everyday life in the future."*



*Jennifer Kniveton, Leonie Boddington, Kathy Councillor*

### And then one day...

in 2005, the program was transferred to the Irra Wangga Language Program at Bundiyarra Aboriginal Community Aboriginal Corporation. Irra Wangga, which employs a coordinator, a linguist and three language workers, have carried on the important language documentation work began by the Yamaji Language Centre. One of the major projects of the language centre has been the publication of a dictionary in the Wajarri language, and the partnership between the Irra Wangga Language Centre and the Yamaji Language Centre was crucial to the production of this important language resource.

Irra Wangga have continued to record and document the languages of the Mid-West, and focus in particular on compiling a dictionary of Wajarri, the strongest and most widely spoken language of the Mid-West region.

Many linguists and language workers have worked on producing the Wajarri Dictionary, working in close collaboration with Wajarri Elders to collect this important information. For this project, we would often take Elders out on country to important Wajarri sites. We would sit under a tree or a spot of significance, because when we are out on country with the Elders, their language is fluent and strong, and often just comes flowing out of them.

We would then take the audio recordings back to the language centre spend hours transcribing the information collected – an arduous and time consuming task! The audio recordings must be written down, and then analysed in great detail so that the dictionary is as accurate as possible.



*Godfrey Simpson, Elvie Dann, Ross Boddington*



*Godfrey Simpson, Gerard Boddington, Colin Jones Jr, Trevor Franklin, Frank Merry and Trent Simpson*

It may seem incredible to people that compiling this dictionary has taken over 20 years, but the entire process is very time consuming. It takes an enormous amount of time to identify new speakers from each language group and develop working relationships so they feel comfortable enough to share their knowledge. People also pass away during the process so we then need to establish contact with other Elders who speak the language.

All copies of the first print run of the dictionary were sold within the first six months, which was a very encouraging sign. The dictionary has been purchased by different agencies, including governmental agencies, primary and high schools, universities, museums, and other community organisations. We even had the opportunity to meet Nelson Mandela's sister, Koleka Anita Mquelwanam who is the High Commissioner of South Africa. Koleka was attending the opening ceremony of the Square Kilometre Array Project (SKA) at Boolardy Station and we gave her a copy of the Wajarri Dictionary which she found fascinating.

### And since that day...

we are happy to see the Wajarri Dictionary being used widely around the Mid-West region. It is vital to pass on traditional languages to our children because language is so important to culture. Language defines who Aboriginal people are, and provides us with a sense of identity and belonging. Many of our children don't know enough traditional language these days and without knowing how to speak their language, it's difficult to keep the culture strong.

Local schools in this region now are using the Wajarri Dictionary, as well as other language resources produced by Irra Wangga, and we hope that this will help revitalise the language. We see kids going home wanting to share what they have learnt with their parents, which is very exciting to witness.

The work of the language centre is far from over; however, as language documentation is an on-going process. The language centre continues to work with Elders and language specialists to record and document more language information in order to expand our knowledge of the languages.

Work with the community on revitalising the Wajarri language also continues, with language classes, workshops and cross-cultural training offered throughout the year. The centre also works closely in collaboration with Mid-West schools to provide assistance with teaching students, as well as with the training of language teachers.

In addition to the work on Wajarri, the language centre is also working on several different language resources for the other languages of the Mid-West, Murchison and Gascoyne areas, including books and learning materials in Badimaya, Nhanda, Malgana, Ngarlawangga, Warriyanga and Yingkarta.

The revival of our traditional languages is vital to the maintenance of our culture. We hope that the work we are conducting at the language centre will ensure that the people of the region can continue speaking them, passing them onto their kids, and keeping them alive. We want to hear our languages spoken by our children and grandchildren in everyday life in the future.

*"The revival of our traditional languages is vital to the maintenance of our culture."*





# THE YIJALA YALA PROJECT



## ORGANISATIONS NAME:

Yijala Yala

## CONTACT PERSON:

Deb Myers, Elspeth Blunt

## EMAIL AND WEBSITE:

<http://www.yijalayala.bighart.org/>

## PROGRAM / PROJECT PARTNERS:

Woodside

## KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:

Stu Campbell, Deb Myers, Elspeth Blunt, Denise Smith

## KEY WORDS:

Youth engagement, collaboration, digital media



This story is told by Stu Campbell who is the Yijala Yala Digital Media Coordinator and Denise Smith who is a local Roebourne woman.

## Once upon a time...

and not that long ago, a lot of kids of Roebourne would be sitting around playing video games. In 2011, I came to Roebourne (Leramugadu in Western Australia) to work with the Yijala Yala Project. My plan was to illustrate some traditional stories from the area. When I arrived, the project was working on a zombie film and the characters which the kids created for themselves had become known as the "Love Punks". They loved this concept so much that they wanted to do more 'Love Punk' stuff and I noticed they were spending heaps of time getting out of the 40 degree heat by playing video games in the air conditioning.

## And then one day...

I decided to follow the kid's ideas. So I put the illustrated stories project on hold and developed an improvised video game starring the local kids. We developed a series of hidden actions that each player had to uncover to earn points. I taught the kids how to create stop motion animations of themselves

## About the storytellers...

Denise Smith is a local Banjima woman from Roebourne and became involved in the Yijala Yala project through her son's involvement.

Stu Campbell is the Digital Media Coordinator of the Yijala Yala Project.

## About Yijala Yala...

Yijala Yala Project is a long-term, inter-generational, multi-platform, arts project based in Roebourne in the Pilbara region of Western Australia. The Yijala Yala Project focusses on telling the story of the community's culture, history and future in a range of media: theatre, film, games, iPad applications and music. Through arts and digital media skill development and content creation, it explores the inter-connection between past, present and future, young people and older generations, ancient and modern culture and how critical they all are to the heritage of the 'now'.

using Photoshop, and they directed me on what they should be doing and saying in the game. It was quite a fun collaboration and the kids were really into it. Over a period of four months, the kids created 2,000 frames of animation. We even won an FWA (aka Favorite Website Awards) for the game which is available at [www.lovepunks.com](http://www.lovepunks.com). We then thought that we should not lose the momentum created by the Love Punks, so NEOMAD was developed to build on the skills the kids had already learnt through the game. The Yijala Yala Project is all about working with the community to create content and develop skills to communicate their cultural heritage to a large audience. We're always thinking of new ways to tell stories. The kids are very involved in the processes behind the NEOMAD concept. The story features the local kids as the Love Punks. They have input into their dialogue and also advise what they would do or say in each different situation. They record their dialogue so that when people get the NEOMAD app on their iPads and tap on speech bubbles in the comic they can hear the kid's voices. They also use donated Wacom tablets and Photoshop to colour themselves in the comic. They did about 85 per cent of the colouring and spent around 200 hours during 70 workshops to colour NEOMAD Episode 1.



They each learnt five pages of dialogue for the film, and we spent a lot of time out in the desert heat filming. They've also been in the local newspaper heaps of times and on national television talking about their involvement in the comic. There are about 30 kids involved in the process, but there are 15 who feature as Love Punks in the first episode, in the film and as characters in the comic. We run workshops during and after school. We try to play to the strength of the kids and they kind of self-select. Some are awesome at Photoshop and do heaps of that kind of work. Others are great actors so they have more lines in the comic and films. There are others who love dancing or music so they're involved in the Junk Punks music clip - which was an extra in Episode 1.

## And because of that...

a lot of things have changed. The kids have picked up a lot - they have confidence, they give new things a try and they know about the digital world. They're not frightened to pick up a phone and mess around... not even on the computer! But now these kids have actually learnt skills, and that is a good thing. One of the local mums, Denise Smith, whose son Maverick is involved in the project told me: "It's great that this is targeting the youth. I think the aim was to involve the whole community and I reckon its working because now the youth are teaching their parents. Maverick and Sidney are always teaching me how to do things on the computer or the phone, because I don't know much about the computer and lots of other people in the community don't know either."

Denise also said she gets a lot of "joy from watching my kids come home happy. They use the computer and they know what to do with it. They're coming home talking about the future and what they want to be. None of my older kids did that.



Maxie colours the comics

They never came and talked about their future or about what they want to do in their life when they grow into adults. Now my younger kids want to be working people." But the project has had a wider effect. Many local people have been involved in the project and Amanda Edwins even went to Korea with the guys (keep reading for more info on this!). Denise explains: "Most people never thought that girl would leave Roebourne! She's so proud of her son. Even the local agencies show the time of day to the kids now. Before, they wouldn't have anything to do with them. We know the young kids can be a bit crazy and it takes a lot of time and patience to work with them, but before the project a lot of people and agencies were pushing them away. It was easy to push them away. But now, there's a group of kids working on the NEOMAD that no other agency would have ever thought about working with." Stu says "we also presented NEOMAD and the Love Punks at the Bucheon International Comic Festival in South Korea.

Initially the invitation was for my work on NAWLZ, (an interactive comic that combines text, illustration, music, animation and interactivity) but after talking to the Festival staff about NEOMAD, they got really excited and invited two of the Love Punks and one of their mums to come along! At the Festival, I gave a presentation on the future of comics and the kids and we presented a two day 'Design Your Own Love Punk' workshop for about 30 other kids from all over the world. That was pretty challenging for two of our local kids, Nathaniel and Maverick. Photoshop was all in Korean and there were heaps of different translators speaking in different languages. The boys did very well and I remember a distinct moment when the whole class was quiet and zoned into their work. All the translators and assistants couldn't believe it. The boys also went to the International Child Comic Creators Camp and met heaps of other kids who make comics.





*Maverick teaches Korean kids*

We hung out with C.B Cebulski, the Vice President of Marvel comics, who was very impressed by the "psychedelic colour scheme" and loved chatting to the boys. Maverick absolutely slammed C.B about the casting of the Hulk, asking why there couldn't be a black Hulk!

### And since that day...

we have decided there will be two more episodes of NEOMAD, released early in 2013. These will be free updates. Episode 2: the Last Crystal is set on Murujuga (the Burrup Peninsula) and introduces the Satellite Sisters, a group of girls who've been involved and a few more adult characters. Interest in the project keeps coming. A few of the Love Punks will be performing on a stage show called "Hipbone Sticking Out" that will tour nationally next year. They are also involved in other elements of the Yijala Yala Project including assisting to colour other stories created in collaboration with some men from the community. And there are also the many benefits from the project that the community hope will continue.

Denise was talking about the project and what she has learnt from it. She said "people should learn to be proud of who they are and give things a go. Other people coming in to the community need to show respect. When I first met you guys (i.e. Stu and his crew) my sisters thought 'Oh same old whitefellas in the community stealing our stories and taking our money. Same old story'. But now we can see what the project is achieving and we are really happy." Lots of the other projects are short term and nothing is stable or lasts. I know it is all about funding, but maybe our organisations, should realise that the project just wants to work with the community, not take sides or listen to politics, just work WITH the community.

"I had this dream that I was doing Photoshop and a bunch of people came to take photos and as soon as I did more colouring for this comic, then I got paid. Then I went to New York to do some more colouring and EJ, Brodie and Maverick were helping me. Then we went to Central Park and got lost! It might come true... In the future I would like to create my own comics or make my own game."

Nathaniel Edwins, 'FutureSmash'  
12 year old Love Punk

"I feel good that we did the comic about ourselves, about us Love Punks. I think I'll read them for the rest of my life and to my children."

Eric Wedge, 'General EJ'  
12 year old Love Punk - travelled to Supanova Pop Culture Convention in Perth

"We made the NEOMAD comic. We used Photoshop to colour in the comic. When you do Photoshop it's very complicated and you have to make sure all the costumes and all the colours are all the same so it looks perfect."

Maverick Eaton, 'Garuwarra'  
12 year old Love Punk

"I practice my lines every day at an office called Big hART where they help kids with their education, learning and reading. Filming went half good, half bad. It took about three and a half weeks to make this film."

Maxie Coppin, 'SupaMaxie'  
12 year old Love Punk



*Denise and Willie*

# NO BAKKI BABY



ORGANISATIONS NAME:  
Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Service (GRAMS)

CONTACT PERSON:  
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PROGRAM / PROJECT PARTNERS:  
Healthway, CUCRH, GRAMS WIRRAKA MAYA, Medicare Local, Midwest Murchison Health Service

KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:  
Juli Coffin, Charmaine Green, Helen Robertson, Rose Murray

KEY WORDS:  
Indigenous health, child health, smoking, education, well-being

### About the storyteller...

Dr Juli Coffin is the Regional Tobacco Coordinator for Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Service (GRAMS).

### About the Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Service (GRAMS)...

GRAMS is a non-government organisation of Aboriginal people, for Aboriginal people, controlled by Aboriginal people. It provides a comprehensive range of curative and public health services to people living in Geraldton.

They agreed to allow us to use the leftover funds to produce 12 advertisements targeting Aboriginal people in the Yamaji and Pilbara regions about the health hazards of both tobacco smoking and passive smoking.



### Once upon a time...

after spending five years researching ways to reduce tobacco exposure to children in homes and cars in the Pilbara, we started looking at the most effective ways to get messages through to families. We had previously developed some radio advertisements but as only about 50 per cent of people regularly listen to radio, we decided TV would be more effective as who doesn't own a TV now days! And images are powerful. I had some stories in the back of my mind and using the information we had already gathered, I approached Healthway and suggested that we make a series of infomercials. The idea was to make sure the infomercials were presented in a culturally appropriate way that Aboriginal people could identify with and relate to. This was important as the mainstream media does not specifically target Aboriginal families and communities and for that reason, I believe the existing messages were not working. I wanted to create ads that would change the way people think. Healthway, who had funded the five year study on reducing Aboriginal children's smoke exposure in the Pilbara, were receptive to my proposal.

### And then one day...

we decided to make the ads in Geraldton and Port Hedland and use local Aboriginal people from both towns. Charmaine Green who is a local lady from Geraldton became my research assistant for the project and helped with the hunting and gathering of actors and actresses. We set about looking for smokers, non-smokers, families and children to act in the ads. We approached the Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS), the Police and Citizens Youth Club (PCYC) and several other community organisations looking for actors. We got the word out to my family and friends in Hedland to see if people were interested in participating. People were provided with an incentive too; if they got involved they would be paid in vouchers such as pool passes or sports store vouchers. It wasn't hard to find enthusiastic people. We even had an Aboriginal Elder who is well respected in Hedland come to my sister's house to offer his story for use in one of the ads! It was fantastic that he approached me as his story was an important one to tell. He is blind and he talked about his working life as a stockman and how difficult it is to not smoke when you are constantly surrounded by others smoking. We produced an ad about him and his story and feel that he will be influential in getting the message out to people about the fact that it is hard to give up but you never stop trying.



“Although smoke is part of our culture and ceremony, cigarettes are not.”

We used people from a range of different age groups and made sure if people acted as smokers then they were smokers. We didn't want people who are smokers saying 'don't smoke', as credibility is also an issue in the community. It's really important that you are credible in what you are saying. We also wanted to ensure the emphasis was on children. We asked the kids how they felt about smoking and we used their language in the ads. So, when you hear the kids saying 'smoking sucks and its gross', they are their own words.

The ads were all filmed by film maker Chris Lewis and based on a total of 10 scripts that I had produced. I had previously worked with Chris and I liked his vision and creativity and the way he works with community people, so it was great to have him on the team. The filming process was pretty quick. We spent a week in Port Hedland and 10 days in Geraldton. Our focus for the ads was pretty simple. The target market was Aboriginal communities but we wanted the ads to also target Aboriginal people in urban, rural and remote areas. The demographic was wide; parents with kids, families, youth and old people. We wanted to make sure everyone heard our message. The adverts had elements of humour and education. Apparently about 50 per cent of Aboriginal people in Australia smoke. My view for this project was to focus on the 50 per cent who don't smoke, as essentially they are our social capital. So I wanted to mobilise them through education and information. It's not about ignoring the 50 per cent who do smoke but we didn't want to give them all the attention. It was also important that we did not victimise the smoker in the ads-the mainstream media doesn't capture that. It's not about the smoker being a bad person but more about the smoker being a victim of slick marketing and advertising campaigns. Our focus was more on stigmatising the habit and the suppliers in our communities, not the person.

## And since that day...

the ads turned out really well and went to air on August 26 2012 on 7Mate, 7Two and GWN. They run until 3 February 2013. They are also on YouTube with a tag line and a short message. We are able to monitor how times the ads have been viewed and so far the No Bakki Baby ad in particular has had a good number of hits. I think it's important that our people realise that we are speaking directly to them and that we do care. Supporting change is never easy but it is essential.



*Making the ads!*

It's important to empower people so they can still do the right thing by giving up or limiting the degree to which they expose children or other non-smokers to tobacco smoke. We've won half the battle if we can get smokers to smoke outside instead of inside the house and we can stop people smoking in cars with children and non-smokers present.

## And because of that...

we hope we have contributed to making a difference. We understand that there are many other important issues and cycles of need in Aboriginal communities and there are hundreds of reasons why people choose to smoke, but unless you give people an alternative or a different way to socialise around tobacco, it's never going to change. People will continue to walk into a house and light up and that's what they do. It's just a habit. So we hope the ads will have a big impact on the communities and make people think about what they are doing. It's great that they are running at the same time as the current national quit smoking campaign which is targeting selected cultural and linguistically diverse groups. We won't know the extent of the reach and impact of the ads until they are finished airing next year but, we love the fact that local people are acting in them. We really feel that that by having our own people spreading the message it will make smokers in communities and urban areas sit up and take notice. Although smoke is part of our culture and ceremony, cigarettes are not.

“I think it's important that people are aware that we do care, and that we are speaking directly to our people and we are supporting change.”



**ORGANISATIONS NAME:**  
Geraldton Streetwork Aboriginal Corporation

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**PROGRAM / PROJECT PARTNERS:**  
PWanggajimanha, Combined Universities of Rural Health (CUCRH), Edith Cowan University, Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Services, Bundiyarra Aboriginal Corporation, John Willcock College, Geraldton Senior College, Department of Indigenous Affairs

Midwest Aboriginal Media Association, Irra Wangga Language Centre, Marra Indigenous Art & Design, Department of Corrective Services

**KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:**  
Merrilyn Green, Leigh Ninnis, Taree Davies, Irene Kelly, Billie Dimovska, Josh Head

**KEY WORDS:**  
Youth, community engagement, partnerships

## About the storytellers...

This story was written by the following staff members at STREETIES; Merrilyn Green (Operations Manager), Leigh Ninnis, Taree Davies, Irene Kelly, Billie Dimovska and Josh Head who are all involved in running the numerous programs at STREETIES.

## About The Streetwork Aboriginal Corporation...

The Geraldton Streetwork Aboriginal Corporation has implemented diversionary and early intervention programs for Aboriginal youth aimed at keeping them away from contact with the criminal justice system. Through many challenges the corporation has remained focused on the young people, maintaining the ethos that some people just need to be given a chance.

## Once upon a time...

in 1991 a volunteer group was formed in response to the needs of young people who were roaming the streets of Geraldton late at night. We named it the Geraldton Streetwork Committee and it was run entirely by community minded volunteers. They walked the streets at night to talk to the young people in the Central Business District to make sure they were okay and staying out of trouble. We quickly established that there were no youth services in the region; nowhere for these young people to go and nothing for them to do.

We decided to create a night outreach program and after attracting a small amount of funding from Lotteries West, we purchased a bus, employed a coordinator and a part time administrator. However, the majority of the staff still volunteered their time to ensure the outreach program could run effectively. It was at this point, operating out of a bus, that our primary objective became to find a permanent space in town for the young people to congregate. We eventually secured the use of an old building in the CBD.



*Our young dancers*

A little later we moved to another building behind the old Post Office which became known as the Drop In Centre. The Drop In Centre was not very structured because although we now had a space to utilise, we had little funding to implement programs. Still, the kids were able to play pool and basketball and do drawing and art. Although it was basic, it was a good start.



## Unfortunately...

we had a few teething problems in the early days because although the location was great for the youth and they were now more engaged, anti-social behaviour was still prevalent at the centre. This proved to be a particularly challenging period because some of the local businesses' started making noises about the proximity of the centre to their premises. We knew we would eventually have to find a more suitable location.

## And then one day...

we got our runs on the board and secured more substantial funding from Lotteries West who were the first agency to display confidence in our service. We also received some funding from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and the Yamaji Regional Council around the same time. This enabled us to actually employ some of the volunteers and bring in some qualified Youth Workers. The funding also facilitated the building of our current complex and Youth Centre at Bundiyarra which was officially opened on 9 June 2000. We called ourselves The Geraldton Streetwork Aboriginal Corporation which, over time, became simply STREETIES.

Now that we had a permanent residence we could start putting our heads together to develop our early intervention programs for Aboriginal youth. Our aim was to develop innovative programs that would help to foster self-respect, confidence and resilience and encourage positive lifestyle changes.



Netball training



We started a dance group, a Netball Academy, an Indigenous women's program and a children's group. We now have a remarkable, committed group of Youth Workers implementing our many programs and a fun, vibrant centre to hold our community events. Here is a snapshot of our Youth Workers and some of the programs they run:

- Taree Davies is the Coordinator for the Midwest Netball Academy. The aim of the Netball Academy is to provide an incentive for Indigenous high school girls from Year 8 through to Year 12 to attend school. Teaching netball skills is a big part of program but we also incorporate health, nutrition, lifestyle and cultural protocol. We encourage the girls to complete school whilst also providing them with life skills so they are well equipped to tackle life after school finishes.
- Irene Kelly is the Indigenous Women's Program Coordinator and works closely with Taree Davies on the netball program. The vision of the Women's Program is to empower Indigenous women so they feel they have a voice in the community and can contribute in a meaningful way. This program enables young Indigenous women between the ages of 18-30 to collaborate on leadership, representation, governance, training, build partnerships in the community and discuss women's issues (such as domestic violence). It is also a forum to work together to support one another to create strong family environments and deal with any issues they may be experiencing.
- Irene Kelly also coordinates the Mayu (which means children in Wajarri language) Program which teaches young children (aged from 6-12 years) dance. It is an after school program which is conducted at the Centre and we currently have 32 children involved. We are at capacity! Our staff collect the young children from school one afternoon a week, provide afternoon tea and then put the music on and let the kids dance! The dance teacher offers the kids a lot of freedom and encourages self-expression and individuality. We also teach the children manners, etiquette, health, hygiene, team work and respect. The kids absolutely love it and it is fantastic to see young leaders emerge in this program.



- Billie Dimovska is a Project Officer at STREETIES and she works closely with the Department of Corrective Services in the region. She, along with our Project Officer Leigh Ninnis, recently coordinated the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day on the 4th of August 2012. This is an annual event which is recognised and celebrated nationally and encourages organisations and communities across the country to stand together for the safety, wellbeing and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

This is a brief overview of our programs at STREETIES but does not encompass everything we do. We are also responsible for organising many significant community events throughout the year.

## And because of that...

as we are an Aboriginal community organisation, it is imperative we interact with our community and provide other services that we (and the community) feel are necessary. For example, we have an open policy on printing eulogy books for funerals and people know they are free to use our facilities if they need to. The other valuable service we provide is the hire and lease of our Gunnado farm which STREETIES own freehold. We were the first organisation in WA to have land handed back through the Lands Trust Handback Policy in 1993. The farm is 35 kilometres from Geraldton and situated on 300 acres of land and was established to care for and accommodate youth. It has excellent facilities including a crisis centre, a 6 bedroom house, a building known as the Alice Nannup Youth Art Centre (ANYAC), a work shed and a community kitchen.

Gunnadoo Farm is used by agencies such as the Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Service (GRAMS) for youth focused camps and to hold youth events and run their programs. Other agencies lease the farm for leadership or sports. Our role is to facilitate this process and make sure the farm is ready for their use. The farm is an important facility for the local Aboriginal youth because it is situated out on country and being on country helps them to reconnect with their culture. There are many youth that we struggle to connect with in the town environment, but the minute they go out on country that changes; it really is the best environment for them to learn in. Instilling a sense of pride in country and culture is an important element to all our programs.



L-R: Jana Fraser, Becky Jones, Chantelle Rosenthal, Merrilyn Green, Sharyn Gregory, Heidi Rosenthal, Marrika Laudehr

## And since that day...

STREETIES has gone from strength to strength and it is an exciting and important time for our organisation. We are continually learning and attempting to improve our programs and find the best ways to do things. For us, it's very important to have community credibility and to ensure we are not just seen as a facilitator for feel good community events.

Looking back, introducing an Aboriginal youth program in Geraldton in the late 1990's was ground breaking and created a great deal of controversy in the community. It was a hard road in the early days and if it wasn't for our passionate volunteers, who were willing to give up their nights and weekends to ensure someone was there for the young people, STREETIES would not exist today. Through many challenges, we believe our corporation has remained focused on the young people by maintaining the ethos that some people just need to be given a chance. We really feel our programs are making a tangible difference to the lives of the youth in Geraldton.







## ORGANISATIONS NAME:

The City of Greater Geraldton

## CONTACT PERSON:

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## PROGRAM / PROJECT PARTNERS:

Dept. of Housing, MRAC Murchison Regional Aboriginal Corporation, Bundiyarra

## KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:

Eugene Paewai, Jerry Penie, Colin Jones, Joshua Joseph

## KEY WORDS:

Environment, health, community involvement, clean communities

## About the storytellers...

Eugene Paewai is the Senior Environmental Health Officer at the Department of Sustainable Communities at the City of Greater Geraldton.

Jerry Penie is the Indigenous Field Support Officer at the City of Greater Geraldton.

## About The Environmental Health Referral Program...

The Environmental Health Referral Program is an initiative implemented by the City of Greater Geraldton. The program teaches people in remote communities about environmental health and provides the support and resources required to clean up their homes and communities.



City of  
**Greater Geraldton**  
a vibrant future



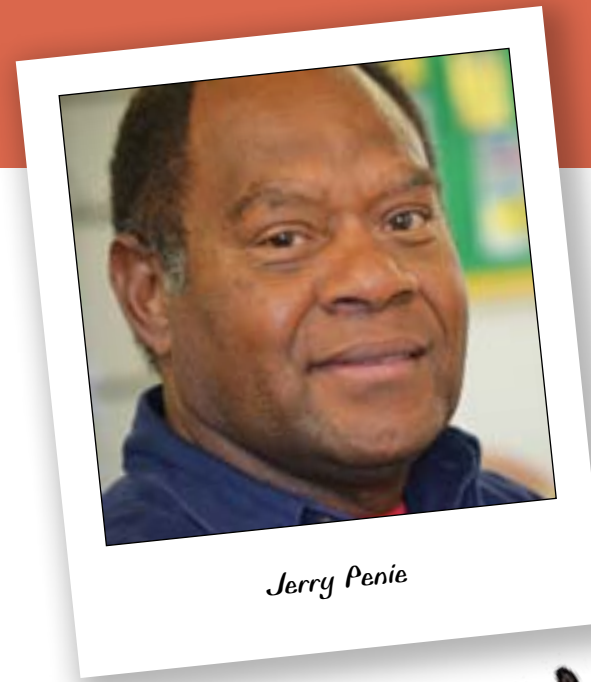
## Once upon a time...

back in 2003, Mark Chadwick who is now the Manager of Environmental Health and Sustainability at the City of Greater Geraldton, was working in remote Aboriginal Communities in the Northern Territory implementing environmental health programs. This involved working with communities and one of his tasks was to teach people about environmental health and provide support and resources for community clean ups. Mark was also instrumental in advocating for better funding resources, people and training to implement these programs.

Upon his return to Geraldton, Mark established there were similar initiatives throughout WA, but not in the Geraldton region. He decided to develop the Aboriginal Environmental Health Program. The primary aim of this program is to increase environmental health outcomes in Aboriginal communities in the City of Greater Geraldton.

It's a simple concept. This is how it works. People call the City Council to request a visit and the call is recorded and passed onto the Environmental Health workers-us. We then enter it onto our program sheets with all the relevant information including the name of the tenant or the community and details about their specific request.

These requests are broad and encompass everything from pest control; grass mowing, rubbish removal or removing bigger pieces of junk such as old rusted cars. We then attend to the job within three days to inspect the house and ascertain what types of materials or tools will be needed to return with and fix the problem. We service tenants in Geraldton and about ten communities in the surrounding area including Kardaloo, Pia and Mount Magnet. We also travel to Meekatharra.



Jerry Penie



Colin Jones



## And then one day...

Bundiyarra Aboriginal Corporation joined forces with us. Although we liaise regularly with other environmental health practitioners and agencies to deliver our services, we work particularly closely with Bundiyarra, especially with Gordon Gray. Gordon is responsible for travelling to the communities and assessing their needs on a regular basis. Once he identifies a need, he contacts us to organise a trip. This way, we can share our resources and ensure a thorough job is completed. We aim to organise at least four comprehensive community clean-ups a year but it is really dependent on when it suits the community.

As part of the assessment process we are also responsible for promoting good environmental health. The last time we visited Pia we gathered all the men together and explained how they could maintain a level of hygiene and cleanliness once we left. We teach people about the myriad of benefits which come from living in a clean community. We explain that environmental health extends beyond their house boundaries and crosses over to within the confines of their homes. We talk to people about maintaining a clean house, a clean property and a healthy environment and how this contributes and improves overall health and wellbeing.

A perfect example is pest control. A lot of houses have cockroaches and rodents, so we explain that we lay down baits and help with cleaning their homes initially, but the rest is their responsibility. We explain that having a dirty home means their kids are more likely to get sick. If their house is clean and all the 'bad bacteria' is eradicated, then they reduce the potential for people to get sick, which means less time visiting the doctor.

## And because of that...

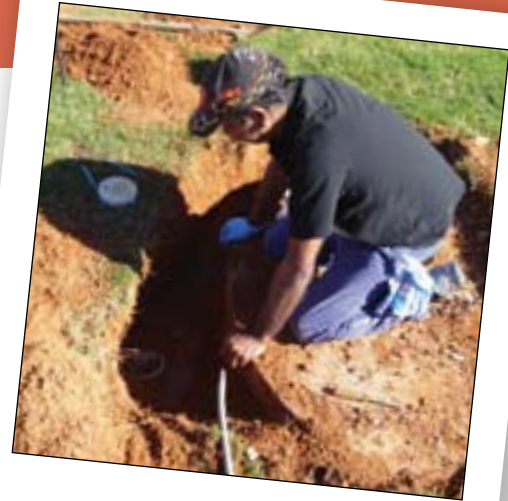
Kardaloo is one of our great success stories. We were aware that the environmental health aspect of the Kardaloo community wasn't very good prior to our visit. They had lots of pigs and flies which were affecting the overall health of people in the community. So in October 2011, we teamed up with Bundiyarra and the Department of Housing and travelled there to do a complete community clean up. We removed a lot of rubbish; fridges, beds, bikes and all kinds of things that were lying around that nobody had any use for. We discussed how to maintain that standard of living with the community. On our most recent visit, it was still in a reasonably good condition so we are very happy that they have continued to look after it and keep it clean.

The program started out very small but has grown exponentially throughout the years. We started with a budget of \$26 000 and we now have around \$300 000 annually to implement this program. We are having a greater impact now than when we first started. It used to take far too long to get access to some of the communities or visit peoples' houses, as people didn't really understand what we were offering. However since we've cleaned up lots of homes, word has finally got around. People are now seeing how other families are benefiting from our services. We also try to ensure we are at their homes on time, and as a result we are building trust and relationships with community people.

After the clean-up is finished, we sit down with people to hear their feedback and see if they are happy with the work we have done. That doesn't always work as some people are not forthcoming with feedback, but it is always encouraging when people do offer their comments. We have recently revised our forms and the type of communication we use to try to make things more effective.



# KEN WYATT - A PERSONAL JOURNEY



*Colin Jones*

## Unfortunately...

communication is an area that still needs improvement. We sometimes struggle to get people to understand what environmental health is. At times, people don't understand that in order to stop having cockroaches and flies in their homes, the kitchen needs to be kept clean all the time and food can't be left lying around, especially on a hot day.

It can also be hard for people to make the connection between the amount of build-up that is in the house, whether it is wet clothing, dirty clothing or dirty dishes and the potential detrimental effect on their health.

It can be challenging at times to get people to understand how beneficial it is to maintain clean homes and communities. Unfortunately in the past we have travelled to a community to do a clean-up, only to have people call us back the next month with the same problems so they are not implementing the advice we are providing. But we will keep trying.

## And since that day...

we are currently working on ways to better disseminate information about the service we offer and the numerous health benefits. We find this aspect of the Aboriginal Environmental Health Program to be a slow progress but at least its progress and that's a positive thing.

We have held a couple of health promotion type meetings to try to get the word out more extensively but sometimes getting community people to attend these events is hard. We have discovered that the best way to let people know what we are doing is to go to their communities and to their homes, as they can't go anywhere-they have to listen to us! But that is a time consuming job.

However, we will persevere with the meetings even if there are only one or two community representatives in attendance because sometimes that's all you need get the conversation going.

It's a great program and we are always pleased to witness people taking on board what we've suggested. We will keep working on promoting the program and trying to reach more people to extend our services further afield so nobody misses out!



*Eugene Paewai*



*The used car yard*

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KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:  
Ken Wyatt

KEY WORDS:  
Indigenous health and wellbeing, advocacy

## Once upon a time...

my mother Mona, who was one of the Stolen Generations of Aboriginal children removed from their parents, gave birth to me. I was born at Roelands Mission, near Bunbury, which was a former home for young Indigenous children removed from their families. My family was big and close and my childhood was filled with a lot of fun times, but we grew up in poverty too. You really learn to look after each other when there are lots of you. You also learn some important qualities such as camaraderie, working in a team and being supportive and tolerance of others. These are qualities I have carried through my life. The values of education, honesty and discipline were instilled into us from a young age by our parents and I would say my interest in politics was probably sparked during my early childhood years and continued to grow and expand throughout my education.

Later on, while I was training to be a teacher, I have clear memories of getting visits from Native Welfare as late as 1972. Until that time, those of us deemed Aboriginal were fundamentally wards of the state. I now have my Native Welfare files and it has made interesting reading due to some of the summations and value judgments that were made about me. One entry says 'this lad has potential but whether he has the capability is the issue'. Statements like that only further fuel my determination to do something worthwhile with my life! When I came to Perth from Meekatharra, I was very active in the student union movement and held leadership roles from a young age. I then enrolled to study teaching at university, and concurrently joined the Morley Branch of the Liberal Party. While there, I worked closely with Mathias Cormann (now a Senator) and had the opportunity to move up in the Division. Shortly after, I secured a position in Sydney as the Director of Aboriginal Health in NSW.

## About the storyteller...

Kenneth George Wyatt AM is a member of the Australian House of Representatives representing the electoral division of Hasluck in Western Australia for the Liberal Party of Australia. He was born at the Roelands Mission in Western Australia in 1952.



*'Close the Gap' breakfast function*

I joined a local Sydney branch of the Liberal Party and my political journey well and truly began to gather momentum.

## And then one day...

on my return to Perth from Sydney in 2010, I joined the South Perth Branch of the Liberal Party. I just happened to be at a function when several friends of mine suggested that I should nominate for the Federal seat of Hasluck. Upon their suggestion my immediate thought was; is Australia ready for an Aboriginal Member of Parliament? I had thoughts about nominating for a State seat in the past but I'm glad I waited as I have so many life experiences that I can bring into Parliament and to the Party. I also don't believe Australia would have been ready had I nominated 20 years ago. We certainly weren't there in our mindset.

When I went for pre-selection, I felt that it was important to make clear to people first and foremost was that I was of Indigenous heritage.





*Ken Wyatt presenting the 2012 Hasluck Young Leadership Award to David Della*

I have Wongai, Namadji and Noongar heritage and I didn't want that misunderstood. I then went on to explain to the local Liberal Party members why I believed that I was the best person to represent the Hasluck community.

Thankfully the branch members agreed and I was pre-selected as the Liberal Party candidate for the seat of Hasluck. I felt such a sense of elation that I had been pre-selected on merit and that people saw the value of what I was saying. I started work as the Candidate for Hasluck straight away, getting out into the community to meet voters. Talking about myself was really tough, as Aboriginal people don't do that. We always talk about 'we' the community or 'us' collectively. We've never been a people that have said 'I' and talking in the first person is not something we do. It was challenging for me to do.

After many grueling months of campaigning, it was an honour to win the seat of Hasluck. On my first visit to Parliament House, pulling up outside the entrance was an incredible moment for me. I just stood there and thought 'I started a journey as a skinny ankle Noongar kid in Corrigin and am now standing at the very doors of the place that makes the laws which affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across this nation.' I felt a sense of humility but I also felt a sense of reverence for the Institution. I was privileged to have been given a kangaroo skin cloak with feathers from a red tailed black cockatoo by the Elders, which signifies a leadership role in Noongar culture. Normally Parliamentarians wear a suit in the Chamber because anything else is considered a prop, but an exception was made to allow me to wear the cloak while I delivered my first speech to Parliament.

During my speech, I remember feeling quite emotional when I acknowledged Kevin Rudd for the apology to the Stolen Generations. When I finished speaking, I looked up to Anna, my fiancée, and was overwhelmed that around me, Parliamentarians of all persuasions were on their feet clapping. People were also standing in the galleries and you could see people with tissues to their eyes. At the time, I remember thinking, 'wow, what a moment'.

### And because of that...

I am pleased to have run for a Lower House seat rather than a Senate seat. I think I have shown that I've broken a glass ceiling for our mob and any of us, if we want to become a Member, just have to serve through the Branches of the Party we are in and do the hard yards. I believed in myself during that campaign, in the information I was provided with, and how I was able to share that with people. Sometimes it was difficult to remain consistently positive as politics can be so negative. I love being a Member of Parliament. I think it's fantastic and I have become an unofficial consultant to other Members about Indigenous issues. On National Sorry Day, for example, I had Members contact me wanting to know the significance of wearing the wild desert rose.

All of us that currently hold Seats set an example to our young people. Hopefully they can see that nothing is impossible. I love the achievements of our sportspeople but I also want to see how people view those who succeed in the broader spectrum of life. One day I hope to see an Aboriginal person as the Prime Minister of Australia on merit. I believe it will happen. Once we start breaking ground in that area, we can hold any position we choose to and that's something I've always advocated. We don't need to rely on our identity. We should always be proud of who we are but use our skills and our knowledge to be leaders and take mainstream positions. I believe education is paramount and all of our young people who are now succeeding have had a successful education. We've got people going into finance, running their own businesses and people who now hold significant leadership roles in both the public and private sector.



*Australia Day Service, 2012*

### And since that day...

I realise there is still more work to do. Although we have come a long way forward, there are still many Aboriginal people in Australia who would benefit from an increased focus on health and education resources. It's about empowering people to make choices but at the same time giving them a hand up and helping them walk into the future where they can hold their place anywhere in this country. Our mob needs to ask: what do we want to change and what do we have to do to make things different? There is still a lack of understanding about the uniqueness of Aboriginal culture in Australia, but if we can increase everyone's understanding I think we can change the future.

We need to change the approach that we should only access Aboriginal identified programs and buckets of funding. When people use the phrase 'mainstream' they should be referring to government services because they are there for everyone. Aboriginal communities and organisations should be re-evaluating what services they access. Ultimately we need to hold people who manage programs accountable for delivering and working to ensure improved outcomes. In 20 years' time, I hope we don't have the need for dedicated programs. I also hope to see many more Aboriginal people in leadership positions.

The journey to further recognition of Indigenous Australians within the Constitution will continue. The work of the Expert Panel of which I had the privilege of being on, reflects the views of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people across this nation but it is critical that we push out the timeline so we share a better understanding with all Australians.



*Ken Wyatt delivering his Maiden Speech in Parliament*

You can't win a referendum unless you have the hearts and minds of Australians and you have the preparedness to walk together. I feel grateful that I have many things to be proud of in my life. At the top of the list are my two highly successful sons.

I am proud of my achievements in health and education and that adversity has never been a barrier for me to achieving my goals. I am also thankful for all of the support I have had from my wife Anna.

But above all else, I am grateful for the inner peace I have within myself. That's what I love about our people. We have an inner spirituality and connection to our country and Mother Earth. What I love doing when I go anywhere in the rural regions of Australia is to go for a stroll and just sit on a rock and absorb the sounds, the smells of the bush and watch the black sky full of stars. You experience that sense of oneness and when you come back you are absolutely revitalised. Or, when you sit with the Elders and have a yarn about the past or what their country means to them - I just love that feeling of serenity it brings me.

*"It's about empowering people to make choices but at the same time giving them a hand up and helping them walk into the future where they hold their place anywhere in this country."*





## ORGANISATIONS NAME:

Puntukurnu Aboriginal Medical Service (P.A.M.S)

## CONTACT PERSON:

Tina Ewen, Regional Tobacco Coordinator

## EMAIL AND WEBSITE:

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## PROGRAM / PROJECT PARTNERS:

PAMS, Department of Sport and Recreation

## KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:

Tina Ewen, Madhu Venkatachalam, Murray Masters

## KEY WORDS:

Youth, leadership, education, engagement



## Once upon a time...

I was working with the Puntukurnu Aboriginal Medical Service (PAMS) in Newman as the Regional Tobacco Coordinator promoting No Smoking programs in the community. Although smoking was my key focus, I was particularly concerned about the general health and wellbeing of many of the youth, and particularly the boys in the region, so I looked into the possibility of organising a Youth Leadership Camp for Indigenous teenage boys. We looked at various locations and decided it would be good to take the boys out of the region and away from local influencers, into a new environment. Woodman Point Recreation Campsite in Perth was the perfect choice because of the variety of facilities it could offer including residential and recreational activities. Madhu Venkatachalam, who is the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Coordinator at PAMS was keen to be involved. It was decided that I would coordinate the camp and come down for several days but that Madhu would travel down with the boys to run the camp.

Based on what we had seen in the community, our target age was teenage boys from 12 to 16-years-old who came from disadvantaged families. We wanted to provide a fun camp filled with activities focused on training around leadership (with a view

## About the storyteller...

Tina Ewen is the Regional Tobacco Coordinator at Puntukurnu Aboriginal Service in Newman.

## About Puntukurnu Aboriginal Medical Service...

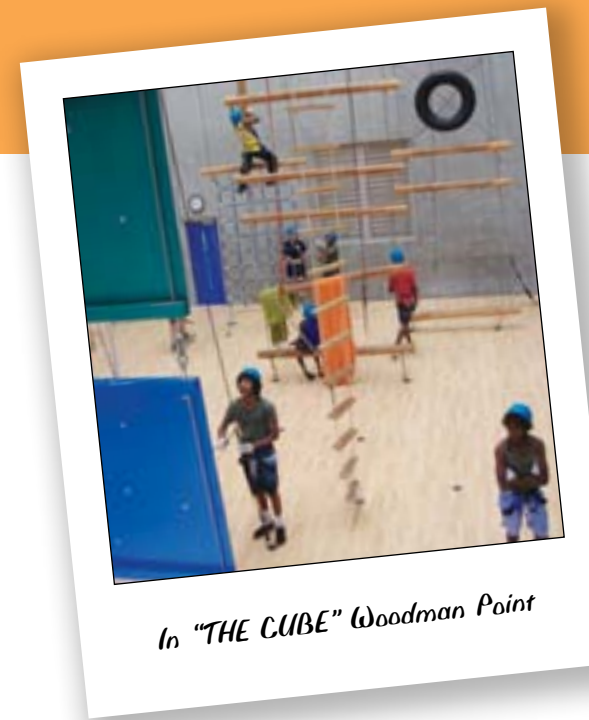
Puntukurnu Aboriginal Medical Service (PAMS) presently provides services to Jigalong, Punmu, Kunawarritji and Parnngurr with a client base of 830 and growing. PAMS' Clinics are located at Jigalong (Hub), Punmu, Parnngurr and Kunawarritji; for reference the straight line distance from Jigalong to Kunawarritji is approximately 430 kilometres, the distance from Kunawarritji to Port Hedland by road is 763 kilometers. PAMS has over 830 registered clients with the majority living in Jigalong.

to them becoming leaders in their communities) and incorporating a health and wellbeing agenda. We received funding from Closing the Gap and recruited 11 boys to participate. The recruitment process included contacting the high schools in Roebourne, Newman and Port Hedland to see who was interested and which boys met our criteria.

## And then one day...

during the 2012 October school holidays, we travelled down to Perth to attend the five day camp. We chose the Woodman Point Recreation campsite as we wanted to incorporate physical activities into our education and training program. The boys were very excited when we got there and they saw what was in store for them. The Woodman Point Adventure Training Centre, known as "The CUBE" sits in a large grassed area of the camp, surrounded by the residential and food halls. The CUBE is a modern, innovative roping facility designed for all ages and abilities.

Some of the activities provided in the CUBE are rock climbing, climbing elements, high ropes and abseiling from several heights both indoors and outdoors and a 120m long flying fox. I doubt most of the boys had ever seen anything remotely as fun before!



In "THE CUBE" Woodman Point

We engaged the boys in team building activities using the equipment in the CUBE so they could get to know each other better. Needless to say, they loved it! The course also involved education, goal setting and looking at what leadership is and why it's important. The educational element focused on the boy's health and wellbeing and in particular the message we wanted to impart was; "Do not take up smoking!" Two of the boys on the camp were actually smokers so the message for them was framed a little differently, but was still pertinent to everyone else. We discussed the detrimental effects of smoking, the financial costs and the lifelong negative effects tobacco use can have on individuals and their families.

## And because of that...

we made sure we delivered the topics in an enjoyable way. The Drug and Alcohol Service came to deliver an educational session and one of their activities was aimed at showing the effects of drinking alcohol. Each of the boys was given a pair of 'beer goggles' to wear, which are glasses that create the illusion of being drunk. Once on, your vision becomes blurred and if you try to walk normally you can't. We thought it was a funny and effective way to get the message across to the boys that abusing alcohol not only affects you physically but makes you look pretty silly too when you can't even walk straight! A Health Promotion Officer from the Northwest Metropolitan Health Service named Robert Murray came in and spoke to the boys about detrimental effects of smoking. We also incorporated the importance of making informed choices and thinking before acting. Several of the boys, particularly the ones from Roebourne who came from low socio-economic backgrounds, hadn't had this sort of opportunity before so they found the whole experience inspiring.

## Unfortunately...

as this was the first Indigenous Boys Leadership Camp we had run, we had a few teething problems during the first couple of days. Some of the boys took a little while to warm to each other and establish bonds. But I think that is probably a common issue at most camps involving teenagers. We also found that the age gap between the 12-year-old and the 16-year-olds boys was too wide and they weren't really able to establish connections or work together as easily as the boys who were the same age. In the future, we will look at changing this so the oldest boy will be 15 not 16. Hopefully that will make a difference. However, these were only minor issues. Overall the camp was very successful.

## And since that day...

we have had feedback from quite a few of the parents of the boys. They have commented that they have noticed a positive change in their kids. The main aim of the leadership camp was to encourage the boys to become potential leaders within the community, and based on what I see in the communities, I definitely think we achieved that outcome with several of the kids. It was great to interact with the boys and it made me feel happy to see that they enjoyed the camp so much. I really think that it provided enormous benefits. Many of the boys were asking us straight away when the next camp would be run. Although we couldn't answer that question at that point, we are working hard to ensure we can run them regularly in the future.



Graduating!



# MULBA-GNARLI ... MEN ON THE MOVE



## ORGANISATIONS NAME:

Mulba-Gnarli IBN (Innawonga, Banyjima, Niapaili)

## CONTACT PERSON:

David Fernandez, Douglas Cook, Wayne Stevens

## EMAIL AND WEBSITE:

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## PROGRAM / PROJECT PARTNERS:

IBN Corporation

## KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:

David Fernandez, Douglas Cook, Wayne Stevens

## KEY WORDS:

Leadership, training, health and well-being, friendships, community

## About the storytellers...

### David Fernandez

is Coordinator/Field Officer of the IBN Group in Tom Price.

### About Wayne Stevens...

Wayne comes from Gurama country in the Pilbara and takes great pride in his culture and language. He has recently started a traditional dance group with several of the men in the Mulba-Gnarli Group.

## About the Mulba-Gnarli Group...

The Mulba-Gnarli Group is an Aboriginal Men's Group that was established in Tom Price in 2011 and is funded by the IBN Corporation.



## Once upon a time...

in Tom Price in June 2011 there were a lot of services for Aboriginal children, women and Elders, but very little for men. I also noticed that the women ran all of the services and were also the Chairpersons of the local communities. This piqued my curiosity as to where the male community representatives were. So, I started chatting to the local Aboriginal men in the area and many agreed that there were not enough men in leadership positions, either in Tom Price or the surrounding communities. It was at this point that we decided to start up a men's group with the aim of addressing some of the important issues concerning men in the region; not just around leadership and representation, but about life in general.

We wanted to provide a friendly, safe environment so we could get together to communicate, connect and learn from one another. With financial support from the Innawonga, Banyjima, Niapaili group (IBN) (which is a self-governed Aboriginal Corporation) we set a date for our first meeting. This meeting was held in Wakathuni community and six men showed up which we thought was a great turn-out for an initial meeting! We focused on getting to know one another and what we hoped to achieve with our new group.



*The dance group*

Firstly, we agreed that we would try to meet as often as possible and secondly we decided our meetings would focus on what we wanted to change and the roles we wanted to play in our community as husbands, fathers, grandfathers and community Elders. It was a positive first meeting and everyone left filled with a sense of possibility.

## And then one day...

early on in the meetings one of the topics that came up frequently was mental well-being which indicated its relevance and importance to the group. Within this theme, the issue of anger management was openly discussed. Some of the men found that anger management was something that they struggled with and agreed it would be useful to attend anger management training.

This was another positive step as it was not easy for the men to discuss this topic openly and admit that they needed help. This particular meeting stands out, as it was certainly an icebreaker!

There was a lot of enthusiasm for the meetings in those early days so it wasn't hard to continue getting together on a regular basis after we got the group off the ground. We did find however, that the attendance level fluctuated. This didn't concern us though because we were happy to run the group with only two people if need be.

My role as group facilitator is to ensure the space is comfortable and non-threatening, the conversation is on the same level and the environment is positive and supportive. We discuss just about everything including but not limited to; family, men's health, culture and lore, relationships, work, training and drug and alcohol abuse. Some of the men have had very little education and therefore have limited literacy skills so we work around that by disseminating information verbally.

For example, rather than hand out brochures, we talk and encourage the men to ask questions. It's great because the more verbal communication that takes place, the quicker the shyness disperses and the men start to open up to one another. Although it takes a long time to build up the trust within the group, when the trust does form, it is amazing to witness.

*"One of our men, Thomas, is in his eighties and is a very influential Elder from the region. He plays music and sings and is teaching some of the younger men traditional songs."*



## And because of that...

at this stage most of our members are from the community of Wakathuni although we have several members from Tom Price too. The group can sometimes be comprised of up to 20 men although often there are just six but that's one of the great things about this group - it's dynamic and changing.

When new people come in they always bring something new to the forum. Another objective of the group is to provide the men with the necessary support so that they can find paid employment; we really hope to help everyone transition from being dependent on Centrelink payments and into paid work.

We are now involved in many different things as a result of this group. Several of the men formed a traditional dance group and late last year we had the opportunity to send a couple of the dancers to Darwin to attend the annual Garma festival. This was an exciting opportunity to see how other men's groups operate and to witness how they promote and preserve their culture through dancing and performing.

We have also had the opportunity to attend the last couple of National Aboriginal Men's Health Forums in Perth and we are planning to attend the next one in Brisbane. These Forums aim to bring together as many men as possible who are either working in Aboriginal health or involved in helping people in their communities so we feel it is important to attend as many as possible.

We also produce a newsletter once every four months which is disseminated to the communities of Wakathuni and Bellary Springs and keeps the group and their families up to date. We are hoping to train one of the men to compile the newsletter this year in keeping with our aim of working towards self-governance. One of primary reasons for getting this group together is so the men can eventually take complete ownership and run it on their own.



# THIERRA CLANTON ... A YOUNG LEADER'S STORY



## Unfortunately...

beginning a group from scratch has its challenges. Although the group had agreed to try to meet on a regular basis we have found this is not always possible. In Aboriginal culture, lore ceremonies and funerals are very important and take precedence over everything else. People often move around a lot as well and can be difficult to pin down but we continue to organise meetings on a set day and go ahead with them, regardless of who can attend.



*Getting ready to perform*



*Lunch time!*

## And then one day...

just recently we have started doing trips out into the bush, which is one of the first things the group wanted from day one. In August last year, we were lucky enough to have access to two brand new four-wheel-drive vehicles courtesy of IBN Corporation to facilitate this important activity. The group loves these trips and the opportunity to be together on country and experience culture.

One of our men, Thomas, is in his eighties and is a very influential Elder from the region. He plays music and sings and is teaching some of the younger men traditional songs. He is full of stories of days past and he shares his cultural wisdom with the group. Thomas is a very valuable and powerful presence in the group.

A recent exciting outcome since the groups' inception is that three of our men recently graduated as Environmental/Health Workers after completing their training in Perth. I really believe that this result would not have been possible had we not started this group.

Our meetings really have everything the men need; they provide and sustain relationships, cultural engagement, encouragement and support, leadership skills, training and workshops and information and education. The men get so much out of coming to these meetings and workshops and we'd love to see this project continue. Our aim at the moment is to link in with other men's groups in WA so we can develop networking opportunities and share resources and knowledge. We still have much to learn but feel we have achieved an immense amount since that very first meeting back in June 2011.



*Aboriginal Elder, Thomas*

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**KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:**  
Thierra Clanton, Tim Turner

**KEY WORDS:**  
Youth, leadership, self-esteem, participation, community

## About Thierra Clanton...

Thierra Clanton is a 21-year-old Aboriginal African American woman. Her mother is a Wongai, Yamaji, Noongar and Gidja woman and her father is an African American and Native American Indian, Cherokee and Navajo man. She is also a young Indigenous leader and role model. She shares her story about being a young Indigenous leader and making a difference.



*Thierra Clanton*

## About the Swim for Life Program...

The Swim for Life Program is an Indigenous employment program for young Indigenous people. The program combines the philosophy of *Aspire, Act, Achieve* and *Inspire* to train and employ Indigenous participants at the YMCA Port Hedland Pool. The program requires participants to complete their Bronze Medallion and Senior First Aid certificates, and since its inception, has enabled nearly 40 local young Indigenous people to gain employment in the Aquatic Centres in Port Hedland.

## Once upon a time...

in 2008 I moved to Port Hedland from Perth with my mum. I was 16. It was the best thing that's ever happened to me. As a young Indigenous woman, I knew I was passionate about helping other young Indigenous people, particularly those less fortunate than me and the opportunity arose in Port Hedland. Not long after I arrived, I joined the Hedland Youth Leadership Council and started working with and mentoring young people.

It was evident to me immediately that there was very little for the youth to do in the town. Although there was the local park and the skate park for young people to utilise, there weren't many other options or facilities. I was also acutely aware of how many of the remote community people were living in poor conditions and how many young people were trapped in the cycle of alcohol, drug abuse and domestic violence.

After talking to several young people who felt despondent and aimless, it was clear that many wanted to break out of the cycle but needed strong leadership, guidance and support. At this time the Hedland Youth Leadership Council (HYLC) which consisted of 16 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members, between the ages of 14-19 years old, had been recently established by local youth worker Tim Turner. Tim recognised a need to establish a "youth voice" facilitating a dialogue which promoted youth as partners for development. This was established at the beginning of the first wave of the Pilbara mining boom and whilst there were many initiatives, nearly all had failed to consult with the youth of the town.

The members of HYLC decided to put our heads together and we came up with several different ideas which were presented at a youth summit facilitated by Professor Fiona Stanley and attended by 160 people across 50 community agencies, State Government agencies, and the resource sector. This is where I found my voice for the first time and learnt that even as a young person I can impact the social, economic, and political agenda.





*The Lifeguards*



I jumped at the chance to become involved. The program combines the philosophy of Aspire, Act, Achieve and Inspire to train and employ Indigenous participants at the YMCA Port Hedland Pool. It also aims to increase the participation levels each year with a view to expanding into other towns with Indigenous Australians within their community. The program requires participants complete their Bronze Medallion and Senior First Aid certificates, and since its inception as has enabled nearly 40 local young Indigenous people to gain employment in the Aquatic Centres in Port Hedland and for others to secure work in both the mining and horticultural industries. Tim and I worked together for nearly five years at Swim for Life and I am very proud to be one of the Founding Members of this innovative training program.

This event marked a golden period of youth development work in Hedland. The commitment of HYLIC to meet weekly and represent the views of young people resulted in several key partnerships and strategic projects. These projects were led by the youth and supported by government and the resource sector. They include the \$10 million expansion of the JD Hardie Centre and the establishment of both a recreation centre and a youth and family centre in 2012.

The HYLIC also advocated for activities in Hedland which saw the development of the annual Youth and Health Festival known as Portbound. Portbound is a three day festival which attracts an investment of over \$100K per year. One of the other exciting activities developed by the HYLIC is a hip hop project which has grown to become known as 'The Hood'. 'The Hood' is now a state-wide program which is also implemented in Gosnells. Another exciting development is that the program is on the verge of going international in countries such as Dili and Artic Canada, targeting youth on the streets. I really believe that Hedland is leading the way in Australia for its innovative youth programs and opportunities for young people.

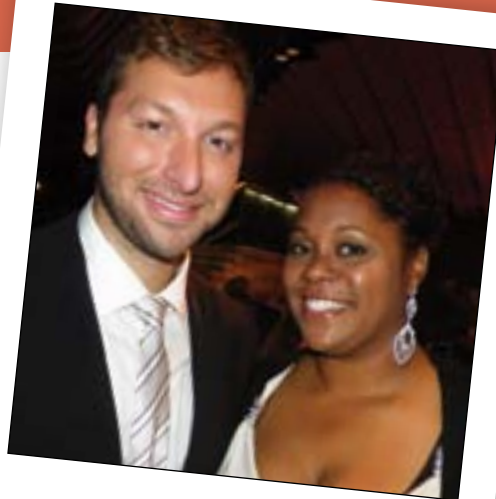
### And then one day...

in 2008 I was aware it was really hard for Indigenous youth to get jobs in local retail and fast food outlets. There was a perception that Indigenous youth were discriminated against and couldn't get casual employment. The Hedland Youth Leadership Council approached Tim Turner who was in the process of starting up the Swim for Life program through the YMCA, which is Indigenous employment program for young Indigenous people.

It was an important experience in my life and taught me the value of hard work and the benefits of supporting and encouraging young people to achieve their goals. It was also inspiring to see leaders emerge as a result of graduating from the program. One young graduate in particular, Malcolm Anderson, was just outstanding and epitomises the success of the Swim for Life program. He was 15-years-old when he completed the program and not long after, he secured an apprenticeship with one of the mining companies in Port Hedland. He now supports his family financially with the income from his apprenticeship. Malcolm's achievements have had a positive impact on the local community and he is a great role model for young Indigenous people.

*"My mum inspired me to get involved in the community and help those less fortunate and instilled the value of education in me."*

There are lots more similar stories as a result of the Swim for Life program. In the early days we had to really work hard to convince Indigenous kids it was a good idea to work as a lifeguard but five years on we have kids and their families coming to the YMCA wanting to know when the next Bronze Medallion course is running so they can be employed in their first job. This represents a quantum shift in the youth culture of Hedland defined by a relationship of high expectations and anticipated success.



*Thierra with Ian Thorpe*

Being part of the development of other young people through Swim for Life is something I will always treasure. It was also an incredibly productive period for me as I completed further training in swimming teaching qualifications and lifeguard pool operations.

### And because of that...

moving to Port Hedland influenced me greatly as I learnt a lot more about myself; who I am and what I am capable of, not just as a woman but as an Indigenous leader and role model for my generation. It's one thing to say "oh I've always wanted to help people in the community" but actually doing it and feeling as though I've made a tangible difference is another. I have learnt all about the Pilbara region and met many local Aboriginal family groups. This experience has helped me to identify with my cultural roots and find my place within the Indigenous community.

There seems to be a particularly strong cultural connection for Indigenous people in the Pilbara. I have enjoyed being part of it. I have met Elders and community leaders and it has opened my eyes to my cultural heritage. I now feel a connection to country that I haven't previously experienced and I have gained an understanding of the different family structures and family ties that are so integral to Indigenous culture.

I am currently enrolled in a double degree at Murdoch University in Biomedical Science and Veterinary Science. Veterinary science is something I have always wanted to do and I believe the work I did in Port Hedland provided me with the skills and courage to enrol in an undergraduate degree.

It really changed my world in so many ways. I was always shy and found it hard to speak to people. I was plagued by a lot of self-doubt as most teenagers are and wasn't sure I had the ability or tenacity to become a vet, but after taking on leadership roles and guiding and supporting young people I gained so much confidence. I am now comfortable public speaking and giving presentations.

### And since that day...

I've gone far beyond my own expectations in terms of personal achievements. I was fortunate to be the recipient of several awards over the last few years. The first one in 2009 was the WA Youth Leadership Award of the Year which was sponsored by Edith Cowan University. In 2010, I was awarded the WA Citizenship Award from the Town of Port Hedland and in 2011, Tim Turner and I attended the Deadly Awards in Sydney where we received the "Award for Most Outstanding Achievement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment and Training. I gave the acceptance speech which was televised. To be recognised as a "Deadly's" winner is a once in a lifetime achievement and is like winning the Oscars for Indigenous Australians.

I was also recently profiled by The West Australian in an article about Aboriginal role models which was an honour. I am lucky that I have always been supported by my family, particularly my mum. She inspired me to get involved in the community and help those less fortunate and she also instilled in me the value of education. I know I am a much more-rounded person after living in Port Hedland. I have learnt that I love helping people and making a difference and that I have good leadership qualities. I now have a greater understanding of who I am in a cultural sense which has been a surprising and important development for me personally.

I know I am still young, but I have many dreams to fulfil. The immediate one is to graduate from Murdoch and become a vet. I'd love to travel the world, study overseas and eventually open my own veterinary clinic. It would be fantastic to be able to employ Indigenous people in my clinic one day.

*"I now have a greater understanding of who I am in a cultural sense which has been a surprising and important development for me personally."*



# THE HORSE WHISPERERS

## ORGANISATIONS NAME:

Puntuturnu Aboriginal Medical Service

## CONTACT PERSON:

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## PROGRAM / PROJECT PARTNERS:

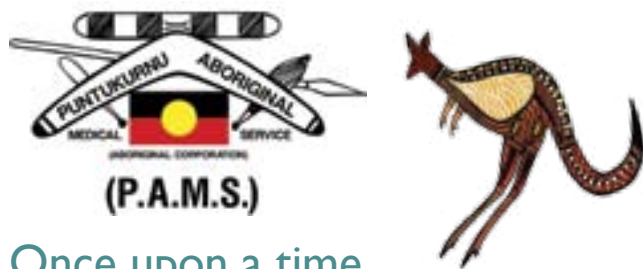
Pilbara Joblink (funding from State and Federal), Steve Burke Trainer, PAMS Funding from COAG State Tackling Transition to Adulthood

## KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:

Madhu Venkatachalam, Sue Michoff, Ilona Diessner, Steve Burke, Wendy Sike, Tania Dutton

## KEY WORDS:

Youth engagement, partnerships, social and emotional wellbeing, leadership, empowerment



## Once upon a time...

we were finding it difficult to engage with many of the young people in the Newman community. We know there are a lot of kids 13-25 years old who are quite disengaged, not attending school on a regular basis and spending far too much time with nothing to do. These youth often have many health and well-being issues and may be disconnected from their family and cultural ties.

At Puntuturnu Aboriginal Medical Service, we were interested in trying to do things differently to capture the imagination of the youth in the town, and knew we needed to come up with something innovative and exciting. We wanted the kids to jump at the chance to get be involved in one of our programs. Other organisations in the region were having similar issues and so we decided to form an enterprise Partnership. Currently, we meet on a monthly basis to look at opportunities to partner and support each other to roll out programs that engage young people and meet everybody's outcomes.

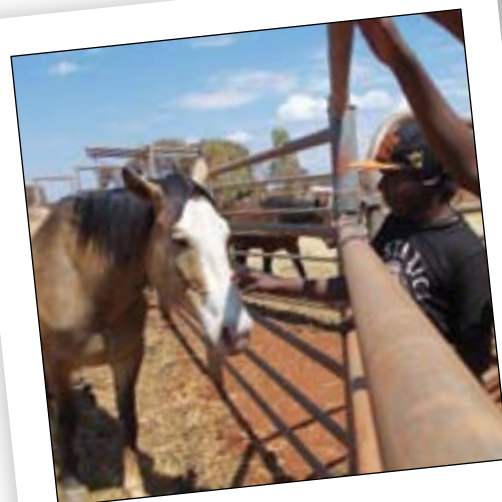
## About the storytellers...

Sue Michoff is the Programs Manager at PAMS.

Ilona Diessner is the Team Leader at the Pilbara Joblink in Newman.

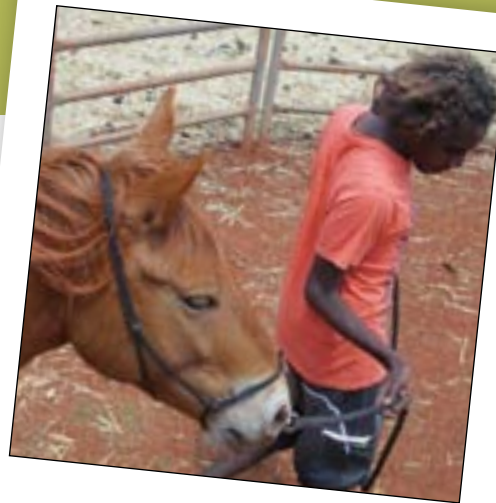
## About PAMS...

Puntuturnu Aboriginal Medical Service (PAMS) presently provides services to Jigalong, Punmu, Kunawarritji and Parnngurr with a client base of 830 and growing. PAMS' Clinics are located at Jigalong (Hub), Punmu, Parnngurr and Kunawarritji; for reference the straight line distance from Jigalong to Kunawarritji is approximately 430 kilometres, the distance from Kunawarritji to Port Hedland by road is 763 kilometers. PAMS has over 830 registered clients with the majority living in Jigalong. Just over 90% of the clients are Aboriginal with most being Martu.



Eugene Nelson

Through this partnership approach Pilbara Joblink identified a horse trainer named Steve Burke from the Northern Territory, who had experience in running Horsemanship Programs. Pilbara Joblink then presented the concept to PAMS and from these meetings the Horsemanship program in Newman was born. This program is a three day horse training program for young people to develop self-esteem and leadership skills.



Corban Williams

## And then one day...

we rallied the local community to help with volunteering and resources to run the program. The Newman Rodeo Grounds offered us the free use of all their facilities and Tania Dutton, a local lady, volunteered the use of her horses, saddles and her time. Newman Gymkhana Club also provided young volunteers to help with the course. We were very lucky to have had the support of the community. They really came together to ensure the event could go ahead. Once the word was out, 19 young people from Newman signed up to participate in the three day course. Their ages ranged from 13 and 25 years old. Once everything was in place, we collected the young people at 7am each morning and supplied a healthy breakfast so they had a good start to their day. The first stage of the program involved communication and building healthy relationships with the horses.

Next it was time for the participants to become familiar and comfortable with the horses, so we hit the rodeo ground and Steve demonstrated how to round up the horses. Once the participants felt comfortable around the horses, Steve spent a lot of time on theory training which included team building and leadership activities. The skills Steve taught participants about tuning into the way the horses were feeling and how to read their behaviours were then reflected back into human relationships and how to recognise and deal with our own behaviours. Towards the end of the program the participants were able to get the horses to do exactly what they wanted them to do; walk along side, stop-start, change direction, use their bodies to control the horse and respond to their body language. To witness the connections that they built with the horses in such a short amount of time was just incredible.

*"To witness the connections that they built with the horses in such a short amount of time was just incredible."*

We were pleased by the level of compassion the participants showed the horses. They had a natural affinity with them and Steve commented that he was surprised at how quickly they learnt how to interact with the horses. Although we didn't have enough time to learn to ride the horses during the three day program, Steve said he felt the kids would be well and truly ready to ride in future courses.

## And because of that...

the pilot program was exceptionally successful and there were a lot of cultural bridges crossed and some amazing connections made between people in those three days. We had several young non-Aboriginal girls from the Gymkhana Club who just turned up to volunteer because it was school holidays. Some of the Martu boys, who, prior to the program, did not communicate with non-Aboriginal girls, were all interacting and working together to lead the horses by the end of the three days. They formed relationships, talked, communicated and worked together; we had rarely seen that before here in our community. They are now confident to look people in the eye from the program and say hello. There is a real sense of community engagement and community belonging that has been built through the program.

On the very first day before the refreshment break, the participants were asked to provide the rest of the group with some feedback on what they had learnt so far before they were allowed to get their morning tea. It took nearly a half an hour for some of them to speak up, but by the end of those three days they were all volunteering answers to questions and a couple of guys even got up to help with the presentation. We observed a remarkable growth in confidence over those days. For example, now, if the participants see Tania around town they will actually acknowledge her and say hello which is unheard of normally.

One of the unexpected outcomes was that a participant enjoyed the Horsemanship program so much that they showed up the next week at the Newman Rodeo Ground to volunteer their time, and arrived there really early-well before they were expected! The Horsemanship program provided the participants with an opportunity to engage, connect and build positive relationships. This is the sort of result we were hoping to achieve and it was incredibly pleasing to see.



### And since that day...

we have since run the program again in November and are planning another one for February. We have offered it to the participants who have already completed the first course but will also bring in new people.

We are hoping to structure the course as a three-step process where the young people progress from the initial program, then begin a mentoring role and eventually become leaders within the community.

The key agencies involved are eager to see some long-term approaches to the Horsemanship program, so we are hoping to develop a long-term program with the horse trainer Steve. We would like to organise Horsemanship camps to be run at outback stations rather than here in town. We feel that if they can be run at outback stations, the experience would be even more authentic and empowering for the participants involved.

Hopefully, if that transpires, we can establish work experience opportunities for the young people at the stations as well. The other advantage of running the program on the stations is it will keep the kids out on country which contributes to their health and well-being and keeps them culturally strong.

We are already witnessing some longer term benefits that have continued back in community life. Two of the participants have taken the initiative to enrol in TAFE courses as a result of doing the Horsemanship program. It is wonderful to see young people moving out of their comfort zones and actively taking risks.

We believe that a lot of why the Horsemanship program works so well for the young Martu people is because their families have been around cattle and horses since they were very young and they are used to working on livestock stations. As some of the kids' grandparents were horsemen back in their day, it is a unique opportunity for them to connect with their Elders. A future strategy will be to bring Elders in as cultural mentors to talk to the kids about their own experience of being horsemen.

We are really happy that we can offer a unique training opportunity which provides some of the Newman youth with a sense of purpose and achievement. We can't wait to run the next one!



*Corban Williams, Steve Burke*



*Jaquin Charles (JC)*



*Joshua Indich, Steve Burke*



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](mailto: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.



