



THE WEST AUSTRALIAN
INDIGENOUS
STORYBOOK

CELEBRATING & SHARING GOOD NEWS STORIES
The South West / Great Southern Edition



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Cover photo - Photo credit: Sunni Wilson

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INTRODUCTION

In Perth during the 1970s, Professor Fiona Stanley collected newspaper articles about Aboriginal health for a year and found that 90 per cent were negative. It is distressing that almost 50 years later, this trend has not changed all that much. We all observe the negative spin in Aboriginal health stories. So often they are about problems rather than community-based solutions that have been developed, and do not give credit to the many positive, life changing projects and programs being implemented in Aboriginal communities.

One strategy to overcome the sense of hopelessness created through negative media is to focus on positive models of change and commitment in Aboriginal communities. There is great value in capturing positive changes,

in collecting and amplifying the voices of Aboriginal people and organisations who are role models, and who run successful ventures in their communities. So in 2011, PHAIWA decided to act on this and try something different. With help from the WA Government and Healthway, the first ever Western Australian Indigenous Storybook was launched in Broome. This Storybook included 13 positive stories that shared successes and challenges. The stories described local services, partnerships, personal journeys and programs which aimed (and succeeded) in improving the quality of life, social outcomes and general wellbeing for Aboriginal peoples.

We are now very proud to be publishing our tenth edition of the WA Indigenous Storybook. Over the 10 editions, we have seen some shift in the way the Australian narrative has changed around our Aboriginal Australian population. Anyone who saw the final episode of *Get Krack!* will have witnessed the emotional outpouring of actress Miranda Tapsell as she told us how angry she was, how she had experienced racism all of her life and how all Australians should be angry that Aboriginal people are dying in infancy, dying in custody and dying decades earlier than non-Aboriginal people. We need more of this. We need more of this diatribe. We need to be made to feel uncomfortable to enable change. The WA Indigenous Storybook showcases Aboriginal champions like Miranda, but generally focus on those who work tirelessly and often silently within Aboriginal communities.

Stan Grant once said, "We don't even yet have a language for Aboriginal success!"¹ Our Storybooks are helping to create that language in a positive way. Within this edition alone, we explore and demonstrate the importance of Land and culture through the Bush Classrooms program, look at how the Sister's Stand Tall program is boosting young Aboriginal women's' self-esteem and recognise the importance of an Aboriginal Medical Service providing bed frames as a way to improve hygiene in remote communities. It's all pretty amazing stuff ... and at PHAIWA, we are incredibly proud to be showcasing these community led initiatives that deliver real benefits and many social, health and environmental outcomes.

We hope you enjoy reading through this edition of the WA Indigenous Storybook.

Dr Mel Stoneham – Director PHAIWA



Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/indigenous/map/>

1. <https://starfish-initiatives.org/lets-acknowledge-aboriginal-success-stories/>

ABOUT THE SOUTH WEST / GREAT SOUTHERN

About the South West

- The South West is located in the south-western corner of Australia and covers an area of nearly 24,000 square kilometres.
- Western Australia's most popular tourist destination, the South West boasts a unique biodiversity hotspot which includes a rich and varied natural environment.
- The towns of Augusta, Margaret River and Dunsborough are among the top destinations to experience award-winning wineries, restaurants, world famous beaches, national parks, tall timber forests and ancient caves in the region.
- The South West is the most populated region outside Perth. The estimated residential population of the South West was 170,000 in 2013 and is predicted to rise to 217,000 residents by 2023.

About the Great Southern

- The Great Southern region is located on the south coast of Western Australia, adjoining the Southern Ocean, where the coast extends for approximately 250 kilometres. Bounded by the South West region on the west and Wheatbelt region to the north, the total land area of 39,007 square kilometres represents approximately 1.5 per cent of the state's total area.
- The Great Southern has a growing reputation for hosting significant festivals and exhibitions and is renowned for its natural and built tourist attractions. These include a rugged coastline, white sandy beaches, tall timber forests, wildflowers and wineries.



*Source: Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development: <http://www.drd.wa.gov.au/regions/Pages/default.aspx>

BUSH CLASSROOMS

ORGANISATION NAME:

Palmerston Association

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PROGRAM / PROJECT PARTNERS:

Wanslea Family Services, Great Southern Aboriginal Health Service, Community Mental Health, Albany Youth Support Association, Alta-1

KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:

Stuart Roberts, Graeme Simpson, Ezzard Flowers, Danny Pinner, Harley Bolton, Ricky Inman, Doug Goodwin, Aaron Bailey, Rob Olgilvie, Jye Walker, Tim Fairly

KEY WORDS:

Men, culture, yarning, role models, support, life skills

About the Storyteller...

Stuart Roberts is an Aboriginal Youth Worker at Palmerston Association.

About Palmerston...

Palmerston Association is a leading and respected not for profit provider of alcohol and other drug services. We have a rich and proud history of providing support through a range of services including counselling, groups, residential rehabilitation and educational initiatives. Our free community services are in nine locations in the metropolitan area and Great Southern region. We have two residential rehabilitation services, one in the southern suburbs of Perth and one in the South West.

Once upon a time...

we were aware that one of the key barriers for people accessing help is the lack of awareness around what services are available in the community. There is also a stigma and shame factor attached to seeking help. There are many excellent services in Albany not being utilised effectively, so developing a program that would enable Aboriginal men to understand what was available was a key priority. To achieve this, we wanted to bring Aboriginal men together in a safe space to engage and develop relationships.



Putting out the fishing net



Making fire

The first step was to consult with the wider community. We spoke to several of our Elder group members who were already connected to Palmerston and to clients who were currently accessing the services. We also spoke to the community about what they felt was needed, and whether a program such as the Bush Classrooms Project would be a good way of encouraging community engagement. Once we had gathered this information, we used our partners, our mail systems, word of mouth and the Aboriginal grapevine to get the word out. We had an excellent response from the Aboriginal community including many young people (both Primary and High School students), adults and Elders.

We developed an objective in the planning process; to reduce the harms associated with alcohol and other drugs amongst Aboriginal men and youth, through the delivery of culturally appropriate and targeted activities. These activities would include having a feed together; spending time with Elders, hearing from support services, learning about cultural practices and valuable life skills. The Bush Classrooms project would be held in the bush at various locations and places of significance to Aboriginal people, and initially run weekly for seven weeks.

And then one day...

we held a planning workshop leading up to the program delivery to identify some potential locations and places to visit. Once we had a core group of men

together, we ran our first Bush Classrooms session, which exceeded expectations!

The format is structured so that the mornings are focussed on relationship and team building. This provides the opportunity for the men to interact, get to know one another, and spend some informal time with visitors who will be there on the day. This approach is an effective icebreaker, and sets the foundation for the rest of the day. Mid-morning, our guest speakers come in to provide educational workshops on topics that are relevant to our men. We spend this time discussing issues that we're dealing with and facing as Noongar men and Aboriginal people. It's a good opportunity to share and learn from one another. In the afternoons, we implement a cultural activity, which reinforces the learning from the day.

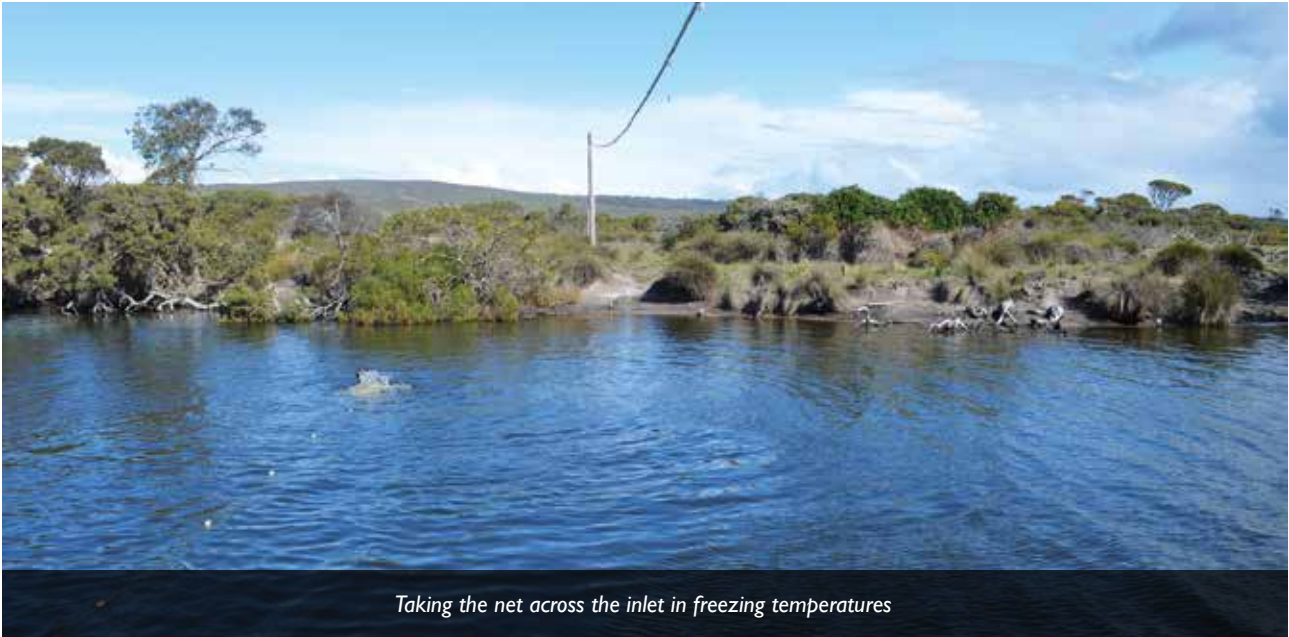
Being out in the bush environment is a vital component to this project, as it creates a sense of connection to culture, a connection to one another as men, and a safe space where the men are comfortable and willing to share, which ultimately leads to a deeper understanding of who they are as Noongar people.

And because of that...

as the staff and volunteers involved in the program are fairly experienced in community services and working with communities, and have been involved in similar programs in the past, the planning and preparation phase was integral to the success of this program.



“Being out in the bush environment is a vital component to this project, as it creates a sense of connection to culture, a connection to one another as men, and a safe space where the men are comfortable and willing to share, which ultimately leads to a deeper understanding of who they are as Noongar people.”



Taking the net across the inlet in freezing temperatures

Although this program is funded by the Palmerston Association under its Indigenous Advancement Strategy, we also have valuable partners who contribute and provide resources such as staff and vehicles, and also a building for us to meet in. These partners include Albany Youth Support Association, Wanslea Family Services, Community Mental Health, and Great Southern Aboriginal Health Service.

We've been fortunate that Bush Classrooms has gone from strength to strength. We were able to be quite flexible and fluid with the delivery of the program, and it has evolved to achieve more than we expected. When implementing the second Bush Classrooms, we used the same approach in terms of flexibility, and adapting and responding to the participant's needs as required.

The beauty of this program is that it's really about ownership. We developed and marketed it to ensure that participants feel that it is their program, and that they have a say in its delivery and implementation. This ensures that they feel empowered and equal. It's such a fantastic, supportive environment. We see each other as family and as brothers.

Participants are asked to complete an evaluation at the start of the program and also at the end. This allows us to measure participants' development in certain areas and gauge their knowledge about what services are available. We also look at their levels of confidence in accessing services (pre and post), and their sense of culture and connection to culture.

There are so many positive outcomes achieved through the program so far. We've had several participants who have developed links with potential employers and secured employment as a result of being involved. We have watched their confidence and self-belief develop exponentially. We've also seen a stronger sense of pride and connection in the younger generation.

The cultural connection aspect is really important to this program. It's about exposing participants to culture, particularly the younger men, as a lot of them don't have the knowledge and awareness that these culturally significant areas exist. They don't necessarily have the means to access them either. Thus, we try to visit places that will help increase an understanding of the significance and importance of those sites to build cultural awareness and a deeper connection with the land.



"This program successfully highlights how targeted, well-supported programs that are led by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people really do work."

And since that day...

we've witnessed some remarkable transformations with several of the men. Men who have been totally disengaged and isolated within the community for a number of years, who haven't left their homes for months and have shut themselves off from the world, have completely turned their lives around. After attending the program, they have come away rejuvenated with a stronger sense of self, and the capacity to be mentors and give something back to the group and to the wider community.

There's a lot of negative focus on Aboriginal people in the media including statistics about incarceration rates, unemployment and alcoholism. Therefore, it's vital that we look at the positives, and build on our strengths and history as Aboriginal people. It's important that we use those opportunities to help motivate us to live positive lives, and be role models for our communities and families. It's also important that we acknowledge the impacts of our past, to help understand why we are where we are, and how some of those impacts have shaped us today.

This program successfully highlights how targeted, well-supported programs that are led by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people really do work. It's really pleasing to see so many of our men come together in such a powerful setting. It's important that we know who we are and where we come from, and that we're drawing upon the positives from our culture and heritage. It's exciting to see how this program will evolve and develop, and continue to impact our men so that they can take ownership of their lives in positive and meaningful ways.



Making damper!



"The beauty of this program is that it's really about ownership. We developed and marketed it to ensure that participants feel that it is their program, and that they have a say in its delivery and implementation."



OUR STORIES IN FILM

ORGANISATION NAME:
Great Southern Aboriginal Health Service

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PROGRAM / PROJECT PARTNERS:
Albany Youth Support Association,
The City of Albany

KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:
Scott MacKenzie, Jenny Tetlow, Jye Walker

KEY WORDS:
Community, health, media, stories, culture, film

About the Storyteller...

Jenny Tetlow is the Program Coordinator at the Great Southern Aboriginal Health Service.

About Our Stories in Film...

The cornerstone event of NAIDOC last year was the premiere of the short film project, Drug Aware Culture "Because of Her We Can". GSAHS teamed with the City of Albany and Albany Youth Support Association to engage school students in this exciting artistic endeavour. The film features local residents talking about the strong women in their life, among them our own WACHS-GS staff. The interview footage was interspersed with art works created by local Aboriginal students at AYSA's Open Access studios.



Eliza Woods and GSAHS Aboriginal Health Worker Harley Bolton share a moment in between filming segments



Vernice Gillies of the WA Museum shares her Because of Her We Can story

Once upon a time...

last October, when the theme of "Because of Her We Can" was announced for NAIDOC week, we knew it was going to be a really big theme for the Great Southern Aboriginal Health Service (GSAHS) because we have a strong focus on child and maternal health. It was at this point we started thinking about what we could contribute as an agency.

When Scott MacKenzie came on board as a Health Promotion Officer, as he had a local government background, he was able to work closely with the City of Albany to quickly form a relationship, which enabled us to collaborate on NAIDOC week.

As Albany is the home of the dawn service, the City had the centenary of the fleet leaving for WWI a couple of years ago. As part of this, a series of beautiful visual stories were produced and projected onto the Town Hall and the Albany Entertainment Centre. We thought it would be fantastic to recreate this and have our own slide show as a part of NAIDOC. However, when Scott investigated, he discovered that would be a multimillion dollar project, which would not be possible for us.

During his enquiries, Scott came across filmographer, John Carberry, who had the capacity to develop a



*Snr Aboriginal Health Worker Chantelle Van Der Brugge
'decorating' fellow Health Worker Maggie Bolton*



*Creating art work for the Drug Aware YCulture
Because of Her We Can film project*

series of film projections. We just needed to find \$10,000, which was going to be a challenge. We applied for NAIDOC funding but were unfortunately too late. Instead, we applied through Creative Arts WA, who had funding available for youth-based media projects. As we had a young Aboriginal Health Worker, Jye Walker, on our team, who had previously worked on coordinating programs, it was the perfect fit. Jye collaborated with a couple of other young people to develop the funding application and fortunately, it was successful.

And then one day...

our team brainstormed to come up with a viable concept that would ensure our project incorporated local youth and visual media. John's approach was to film people in front of a green screen and then animate images behind them. We came up with the idea of organising young Aboriginal people to get involved in art workshops to create artworks, which we could use behind the talking heads.

To achieve this, we worked closely with the Albany Youth Support Association, who run the Open Access Youth Art Studio (an art based approach to engage young people), and organised the art workshops over a four week period. We engaged visual artists and a ceramics artist, which became the focus of the workshops. Youth workers Jye, Ethan

and Brandon coordinated a group of nine young Aboriginal people from TAFE, who were enrolled in the Aboriginal school-based trainee program. This core group were the primary participants of the workshops and developed the art that we used in the projections. Ten other young people also attended the workshops and participated in the filming process. During this period, GWN produced a story on the project and interviewed Jye about the process and what we were aiming to achieve.

The second component of the project was to invite Aboriginal people of all ages from Albany, who had a story to share about an important role model in their lives. We put out an open invite to the Aboriginal agencies in the region and asked several Elders if they'd like to be involved. We had an amazing response and around 30 local Aboriginal people were interviewed.

John filmed all the interviews and the last block of filming was completed four days prior to previewing the film. John was able to edit it all together in this short time frame, which was a very quick turnaround. The end result was a 30 minute film of stories and interviews with Noongar women and men green screened against a backdrop of the original artwork. Unfortunately, we had so many people keen to be involved that we weren't able to include all of the interviews that we had filmed.



Kristin Penny with kids Tahkiesha, Krissy and Tiarah enjoying the Play in the Park activities for NAIDOC Week



Health Promotions Officer Jye Walker helps Violet Clark with her NAIDOC tattoo



Albany high school students Oliver Tetlow, Jarrad Inman and Zary Walker participate in the short film project Drug Aware YCulture Because of Her We Can

And because of that...

we showed a short preview of the film at the Civic Reception as part of the NAIDOC opening. This event, run by the City of Albany, was invite only with Albany dignitaries, local Noongar Elders and invited guests attending. The theme of the evening was to celebrate Noongar woman Bessy Flower's life story and view a short digital film about her.

The following evening, the main event took place and we debuted our film which was projected onto the Town Hall library. It was a wonderful evening with events all centred on the NAIDOC theme of "Because of Her We Can". The turnout was excellent with around 150 people enjoying a moving Welcome to Country ceremony, a live song by Sisters Stand Tall called, "Because of Her We Can" and a smoke machine, ensuring it was a really atmospheric evening.

One of the significant aspects of this project was the importance of occupying the central space of town. When we projected our film onto the Town Hall

library, it was side by side with an Aboriginal flag, and the whole area was lit up in red and yellow. Integral members of our community were front and centre telling their stories. It was powerful imagery and really did give weight to people's personal stories, and value to their contributions and experiences. It was also a wonderful way to engage people through an artistic medium.

And since that day...

one of the tangible learnings to come out of this project is that long-term, we need to move into the visual media space with our projects. This experience has given us the courage to resource ourselves more effectively. We have applied to purchase some digital software as a first step so Jye can produce videos and graphics around health promotion.

Encouraging Aboriginal people to look after their health is an ongoing aim of GSAHS; creating one minute videos to upload to our social media channels would be an effective strategy to get our messages



Snr Aboriginal Health Worker Chantelle Van Der Brugge 'decorating' fellow Health Worker Maggie Bolton



Senior Aboriginal Health Worker Chantelle Van Der Brugge creating face art! Giant bubble blowing action in the background

"It's easy to focus on the negative health statistics with Aboriginal people, but some of the powerful stories that were shared showed the resilience, pride and strength in our Aboriginal community. These important stories need to be heard and shared more often with the media and the greater community."



out. We have spoken to John about filming several short 30 second videos to promote people getting regular health checks, so hopefully we can implement that soon.

Some wonderful stories came out of this project. The first person you see talking on the film is Vernice Gillies, who is from a well-known family in Albany. Vernice spoke about her life experiences, and her story was moving and profound. Many stories that were recorded were able to be shared between older people and younger people, and the film was a celebration of positives rather than a focus on negatives. It's easy to focus on the negative health statistics with Aboriginal people, but some of the powerful stories that were shared showed the resilience, pride and strength in our Aboriginal community. These important stories need to be heard and shared more often with the media and the greater community.



JYE WALKER MY STORY

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KEY WORDS:

Aboriginal youth, empowerment, Rock and Water program, role model, healthy lifestyles

About the Storyteller...

Jye Walker was born in Queensland and comes from a big family. His Country is the Gureng region, Gooreng Gooreng on the tribe map. He lives in Albany and works at the Great Southern Aboriginal Health Service as a Youth Worker.



Once upon a time...

I was born in 1994 in North Queensland. While I was growing up, my family moved around a lot and we lived in several different states throughout Australia. My family are the Walkers and the Paulsons. My Country is the Gureng region, Gooreng Gooreng on the tribe map. I come from a huge family and my family extends far and wide. We descend from the seven sisters (not a story from our land) as do most local Aboriginal people in Bundaberg. The seven sisters were my great grandmother's sisters.

My immediate family consists of seven sisters and two brothers, although several are half siblings. One of my sisters has passed away but I still count her. I would say a lot of the confidence I have today comes from having a big family. When you grow up in a large family unit, you learn rights and wrongs very quickly and develop a strong moral code. You also learn how to relate to people and be sociable. Knowing that you have their support, and are loved, brings confidence and a lot of strength.

And then one day...

I started my primary schooling in Broome and at the beginning of Year 2, I went back to QLD for High School, which I completed until Year 10. I then moved to Northern Territory for the start of my working career. I enrolled in the Defence Indigenous Development Program (DIDP) which is a program to help raise the number of Indigenous people in the defence force. I completed this in Katherine and attained a Certificate 3 in Community Services. On completion I had the option to take up a full time position with the Army or leave.

I was offered a job with the YMCA in Katherine for a year, so I took the position instead of staying with the Army. I stayed in this role for a year but unfortunately I hit a bit of a depression stage and life wasn't working out for me. I was 19 at the time and decided to move back to Queensland. I think it was a mix of being alone and not having my family around me. I was a pretty young and was going through a bit of an existential crisis at the time. While I was in

Katherine my dad and three little sisters relocated from Bundaberg to Albany as my dad had secured a job with a welding company. So, I decided to visit them over the Christmas period and I loved the sites of Albany, the weather was perfect. I returned to Albany in February 2015 and started working as a labourer at various places around town. Shortly after, I got a position through Skill Hire as a receptionist at Great Southern Aboriginal Health Service (GSAHS). Although I was initially employed as a receptionist, one day I had the opportunity to go out with the Aboriginal Youth Worker Health and deliver a workshop. Following that, the manager said to me, "Let's move you from reception."

From that day forward I was employed as a Conditional Health Worker. Although I didn't have the necessary qualifications in the health field, I had some experience and enough knowledge that they were happy to employ me as "conditional". During this conditional period, which lasted two years, I proved myself and when another position became available for an Aboriginal Health Promotion Officer, I was successful in obtaining the role. I was lucky that I fit the necessary criteria and didn't need formal qualifications. I have now been in this position for close to a year. It's a higher paying role and there are more opportunities for professional development.

And because of that...

when I started as a Conditional Health Worker, I was doing case management work with youth. This involved one on one youth work and specific behavioural classes on social and emotional wellbeing such as anger management and healthy lifestyle choices. This progressed when the youth worker Benjamin Miller attained his Rock and Water certificate. Following this, we started the Rock and Water program.

I was attending the workshops with him from day one of the Rock and Water program helping to implement the program for around six months. I then completed the Rock and Water training and am now running my own program. The training to implement the Rock and Water program is interesting as it takes an alternative, free-thinking approach. They teach you the program by putting you through it.

Rock and Water's aim is to build resilience, self-confidence and social skills with a focus on developing self-awareness in youth. It started as a self-defence program for girls in Norway to prevent

sexual abuse. However, it progressed to working with the perpetrators rather than the victims.

The facilitators worked with young men, using self-defence methods to get them engaged and gain an understanding of their bodies and what they're going through, especially the feelings they're experiencing due to puberty. Participants learn that their actions have consequences.

If a young person is being bullied, this program teaches them to gain the confidence and courage to speak up, say they have an issue with it and discuss how they feel instead of copping it sweet, which is the Australian way. In my opinion this is a cultural issue and it isn't okay. The program teaches youth that what you put out into the world is up to you. If you're going to put out negative stuff and be a bully - you'll be labelled as a bully. If you're going to be the guy who gets walked all over - that's how people will view you. The message is anti-bullying. The focus is on helping youth who are being bullied to stand up for themselves. It also teaches those who do the bullying to develop the confidence to not bully others. It's a very progressive program.

As well as the Rock and Water workshops, I run Food Sensations and Smoking Cessations programs at GSAHS and we also run a sexual health program. These programs are all youth-based however Food Sensations crosses over to adults as well.



"My hope is that I can be a role model for my fellow Indigenous people - if I'm working in mainstream jobs then they know they can too."

And since that day...

being a participant of the program and then facilitating it definitely made me realise my own bullying tendencies. In High School, although I wasn't physically abusive, I could be cruel with my words. I was pretty smart and knew how to push people's buttons. I didn't think I was being mean, I thought I was being funny as everyone would laugh. I didn't realise what I was doing was wrong until I completed the program and started working with youth who were on the pointy end of my stick. This cemented my desire to help others, especially those like me who don't necessarily know they're being a bully and don't realise that the person is getting hurt at their expense.

We run this program over 10 weeks and the kids get a lot out of it, you can really see it in their level of engagement with the program and with each other. We teach meditation in the program and the kids who are mucking around at the start the most become the best meditators in the group. The kids often ask the school if we can come back for a follow up workshop. When we return, we advance the program and focus on self-defence techniques. Towards the end of the program, it's evident the youth have developed a new level of respect.

I believe the work we do in the Rock and Water program with the youth is very important and has a great impact. We feel that this program is able to provide the kids with tools that will change the course of their lives. Whether it's the breathing or meditation, the games or the self-defence – they'll take away something that they'll remember and can use in their lives moving forward.

I'm now 24 years old and feel like my life is heading in a positive direction. GSAHS are supporting me to obtain my Diploma in Enrolled Nursing and are designing a position so I can complete half of the course at work and half at the hospital. This means I'll still be community based but I can get my clinical competency as well. I hope to have my Diploma finished by next year. My hope is that I can be a role model for my fellow Indigenous people - if I'm working in mainstream jobs then they know they can too.

My five year plan is to attain my certificate and then travel and work as an Enrolled Nurse in different countries. I really want to gain a lot of experience and as a starting point I'd like to work rurally and

remotely throughout Australia and spend some time in Aboriginal communities. After that, I'd love to go overseas to countries with other Indigenous populations such as Canada, Columbia and South America so I can learn about other cultures in the world and the health issues they face.

I feel fortunate that my parents and my Nan have given me a good foundation and taught me strong morals so I can pursue my dreams with confidence. Both my parents have always worked hard and drummed into me that the only way to get anywhere in life is through a good education, and the only way to get anything nice in life is by working for it. I hope that with this foundation behind me, I can help others.



"I believe the work we do in the Rock and Water program with the youth is very important and has a great impact. We feel that this program is able to provide the kids with tools that will change the course of their lives. Whether it's the breathing or meditation, the games or the self-defence – they'll take away something that they'll remember and can use in their lives moving forward."



PUNMU COMMUNITY BED FRAME PROJECT

ORGANISATION NAME:

Puntuturnu Aboriginal Medical Service (PAMS)

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PROGRAM / PROJECT PARTNERS:

Punmu Community - PAMS - Newcrest - AAC

KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:

John Reudavey, Donald Graham, Community members

KEY WORDS:

Environmental health, Aboriginal health, community, Elders, partnerships, support, innovation

About the Storyteller...

Julius Barker is the Environmental Health Coordinator at Puntuturnu Aboriginal Medical Service (PAMS) in Newman, WA.

About Puntuturnu Aboriginal Medical Service...

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.



Ray "Longman" Thomas and partner with Donald Graham

Once upon a time...

earlier last year, the Puntuturnu Aboriginal Medical Service (PAMS) in Newman was approached by Mr John Reudavey who is the Community Coordinator and CEO at Punmu Aboriginal Community. John was seeking support from PAMS to begin a new community project. He was keen to address the issue of Elders sleeping on mattresses on the floor. Most of the Elders don't have proper beds and often just have their mattresses on the floor, both inside or outside their houses. Living in remote communities can be fairly basic. Although basic housing and infrastructure such

as roads, water and power are provided, many things that most of us take for granted are often not included, such as bed frames. Community members often have no option but to place their mattresses on the floor, in close proximity to dogs and dust. Having mattresses on the floor means that dogs have easy access to the beds and as dogs carry fleas and skin sores, they can be an environmental health hazard. Due to this, several community Elders were getting skin infections and ingesting dust. The health effects of sleeping on the floor have been proven to be detrimental, with lung conditions being a common occurrence.



Completed bed frames



Dwayne Dunn with community members

Given this and the associated environmental and hygiene issues, John wanted to rectify this situation by organising to have bed frames made. We identified that there were 26 Elders in the community in urgent need of a bed frame. PAMS were happy to support this worthwhile project to significantly improve the health of the community members.

And then one day...

the first thing we discussed was how to finance this project. PAMS had some funds available to help with the project and John also approached Newcrest Mining and the Aboriginal Ashburton Corporation for financial support. They were the main two service providers and between the three of us, our collective contributions ensured this project would be possible. John was able to purchase the kit he needed and buy the necessary materials for the bed frames and have them delivered to the community. John had someone in mind who would be able to oversee the project including designing and assembling the frames.

Donald Graham is a volunteer and welder from over east who does a lot of work with Aboriginal communities. His role was to teach several community members how to weld and put the bed frames together. As most Aboriginal communities are not funded directly through Aboriginal Housing, they often find people who are willing to volunteer their services which is an excellent community initiative as

it is cost effective. Donald was more than happy to volunteer his services, he only asked that his flights be covered. Ashburton Aboriginal Corporation (AAC) paid for Donald to fly from east to west and return home, and Newcrest Mining provided the flights for Donald to the community.

Donald spent around two weeks at Punmu community and in that time, 28 bed frames were manufactured. He also trained several community members how to weld and make the bed frames.

“This project has had many positive outcomes. The environmental health impacts are substantial. We have seen an improvement in the Elders’ personal hygiene resulting in less skin infections.”



There were five community members who started the project but only one of them ending up showing the technical skill with the welding that was required. Some of the other members didn't feel comfortable with the metalwork.

At the conclusion of the two week period, all of the Elders were provided with a brand new bed frame. The left over frames were available for free to any community member who purchased a mattress from the community store.

And because of that...

this project has had many positive outcomes. The environmental health impacts are substantial. We have seen an improvement in the Elders' personal hygiene resulting in less skin infections. Having the beds off the floor is a bit of a deterrent for the dogs to get up which means they are bringing less dirt and fleas onto the beds. Having mattresses on bed frames also makes the houses tidier as the bedding is not being dragged around by children or walked on by dogs. The overall hygiene levels in the houses have improved. As the Punmu community store doesn't sell bed frames, a lot of people have never had a bed off the floor. In the past, they would have to be purchased and brought out from town which is logistically difficult for most Elders to do. The distance to travel to town or the lack of a vehicle can be a major barrier for people.

Having this project take place in the community where the Elders could walk across to the workshop and say, "Yes I'd like a bed frame please", made a huge difference to their lives and contributed to their sense of pride and overall wellbeing. The other positive aspect from the Elders perspective was the idea that the younger community members were actually giving them something back – that made them feel really good.

And since that day...

PAMS has just started this project in the Jiglaong community and they have made several bed frames already. PAMS hasn't yet had an opportunity to see how things are progressing. However, we were able to contribute some funds so they could get their project started. We are looking forward to seeing the end result.

Collectively we have improved the lives of dozens of community members with this project, it's an innovative, tangible project that delivers real results and benefits and we are proud of the outcomes.



Dwayne Dunn and Donald Graham welding the bed frames

"Collectively we have improved the lives of dozens of community members with this project, it's an innovative, tangible project that delivers real results and benefits and we are proud of the outcomes."



Bed frames

MOORDITJ PROGRAM

ORGANISATION NAME:

South West Aboriginal Medical Service (SWAMS)

CONTACT PERSON:

Nicole Bowser

EMAIL:

Nicole.Bowser@swams.com.au

PROGRAM / PROJECT PARTNERS:

Red Cross, headspace, Goomburrup Aboriginal Corporation, Bunbury PCYC, Breakaway Aboriginal Corporation, City of Bunbury

KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:

SWAMS – Alfred Stack, Nicole Bowser
headspace – Penny McCall
Red Cross – Max Jetta, Jocelyn Worrigal
Bunbury PCYC – Natalie Raftos
Goomburrup Aboriginal Corporation - Ernie Hill

KEY WORDS:

Education, leadership, mentorship, aspire, role model, health

About the Storyteller...

Nicole Bowser is the Health Programs Manager at the South West Aboriginal Medical Service.

About the Moorditj Program...

The SWAMS Youth Program is delivered on Monday afternoon's from 3.30-5.30pm at the local Bunbury PCYC. The program provides healthy cooking, sports, art, craft and cultural activities for young people. All youth are welcome to attend.

for one year. This has recently been extended for a further six months, enabling us to continue the project until the end of 2018. The project has been so well received that we are confident that it will continue beyond this date.

The program was developed with a focus on building capacity and resilience among Aboriginal youth. Our aim is to connect youth to local services such as employment and training agencies. Providing a safe space and ensuring young people are comfortable to seek help is really important.

We also have a focus on connecting youth to their culture through Aboriginal mentors and role models, and various cultural activities. We feel it is vital that the youth have access to role models who they can trust and be guided by, and who can facilitate cultural understanding.

And then one day...

in February 2018 we commenced our program with an after school session every Wednesday from 3.30 - 5.30pm at the PCYC in Bunbury. The program targets youth aged 12-25 years, however younger children sometimes attend with their older siblings or parents. Although the program is geared towards Aboriginal youth, anyone is welcome to come along. Currently, approximately 90 per cent of our participants are Aboriginal.

We have implemented a sports program involving basketball, table tennis, netball, boxing and dodgeball



Once upon a time...

in 2017 we carried out a review of youth services which revealed a lack of freely available programs for young Aboriginal people. On this basis, we decided to develop a brand new youth program in Bunbury.

Initially, we submitted a funding application to the Western Australia Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) for two projects targeting mental health and drug and alcohol use among youth in the community. WAPHA were interested in our proposal but suggested we combine two projects into one. Our subsequent submission was approved and we received funding



Youth Mural Project. At the Bunbury PCYC showing off the murals created for the youth space

games. To complement this session, we have guest speakers who come in to engage with and mentor the youth. In the July school holidays, we ran five art sessions to develop murals which are now displayed inside the PCYC. This was a great opportunity for the youth to express their creativity, develop artistic skills and contribute to a group project.

We have around 30 youth who attend each week regularly, with some weeks seeing as many as 45 participants attending the session. The sessions are very casual and focused on creating a welcoming and safe space to ensure young people feel relaxed and can be themselves. We play music to create an enjoyable atmosphere, and there are computers set up in the PCYC in case the youth need to get work done such as writing their CVs.

One of the vital components of this project is to collaborate with other organisations in the region. We have joined forces with agencies such as headspace, Red Cross and WA Police who attend the session each week. Red Cross send two Aboriginal youth officers to attend and help run the session.

We promote the program through Newton Moore Senior High School and our Facebook page, and we find that word of mouth is also really effective. Another strategy is to hand out flyers throughout

town and distribute them via other organisations who will then refer the youth to us.

And because of that...

we have lots of plans in place to grow this program. Bunbury PCYC have set aside a dedicated youth space, which we are assisting to transform into a welcoming and vibrant space. It has some furniture and recreational equipment such as a couch, coffee table, table tennis and pool table.

“In terms of social connections, we have noticed some positive changes. Many of the youth are less shy, more outgoing and happier to speak out, which is wonderful to witness. They will say hello when they see you in the street and are more open to getting advice and seeking help.”





ECU Old Ways New Ways session. At the Bunbury PCYC participating in traditional Aboriginal tool making



We are working with the PCYC to secure sponsorship from local businesses to get some items donated such as a fridge or some new couches so we can make it that little bit more homely. If we can build the space into a cool community hub that people want to go to, then there is no reason we can't extend this program to include something different every day after school.

We hope the space will be community owned, which will then create opportunities for more activities and more input from community as to how they would like to see it evolve.

And since that day...

we have seen our program and youth grow! The program is now run on Mondays from 3.30 - 5.30pm as a joint partnership between the Red Cross and Bunbury PCYC. One of the things that's been great is we have a core group of around 30 youth who attend on a regular basis and engage in the program consistently. We know that some of these youth don't live with their families so this is a safe place they can come and feel supported.

**Our Youth
Our Culture**

Youth
Group Mondays
3.30 - 5.30pm
Bunbury PCYC
during school terms
sport, art, games, culture,
a healthy snack

For youth aged 11-17 years
children under 11 to be
supervised by an adult.

For more information
contact
Redcross 9726 6701
or 9726 7602
or
SWAMS 9791 1166

PCYC South West AMS Australian Red Cross



MOORDITJ YORGAS: BECAUSE OF HER WE CAN

ORGANISATION NAME:

Palmerston Association (Katanning)

CONTACT PERSON:

Narrelle Parker

EMAIL:

nparker@palmerston.org.au

PROGRAM / PROJECT PARTNERS:

Shire of Katanning

KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:

Katanning Noongar women who volunteered to have their photos taken, photographer - Melanie English, Katanning Palmerston staff

KEY WORDS:

Women, families, photography, exhibition, empowerment, NAIDOC, Moorditj Yorgas, Because of Her We Can, Noongar women, strong women

About the Storyteller...

Narrelle Parker is the Youth Counsellor/ Educator at Palmerston in Katanning.

About Moorditj Yorgas: Because of Her We Can...

Moorditj Yorgas (Strong Women) Because of Her We Can is the title of a photography exhibition that was held in Katanning at the Katanning Art Gallery during NAIDOC week in 2018. The exhibition was a series of photos of local Aboriginal girls and women of all ages from the same families and was developed to show positive images and share the participants' inspirational stories.



Shenae and Kellie Woods

Once upon a time...

with NAIDOC week approaching, I wanted to involve several of the local High School students in a fun, positive project, and the idea to organise a photography project formed. I thought it would be wonderful to promote positive images of Aboriginal girls to the community through a series of personal photographs. The purpose of the project would be to reveal how everybody has their own unique story to

share and exhibit the photos during a local exhibition. As is correct protocol in the community, we ran the idea past our Elders Advisory Board, and they were very supportive.

After our initial enquiries to gauge interest, we decided to change the concept to an inter-generational project photographing females of all ages including mums, daughters, aunts, grandmothers and granddaughters together. We organised a Women's Day and let other service providers know what we were hoping to achieve. We explained that we would be taking professional photos for an exhibition and invited them to bring their kids and grandkids along. Our two Aboriginal workers Merryl Hansen and Hazel Ealem put in a lot of ground work to get the word out. We relied a lot on word of mouth, flyers, and advertising on Facebook. Our community Elders were also instrumental in helping to get people involved.

And then one day...

several families showed up for the shoot and although we didn't have a huge turnout, the women and girls who did attend were very willing and receptive participants. We set up a room at The Noongar Centre for the shoot and organised food and several activities, including nail polish and makeup for the girls, and colouring in activities for the younger kids. We wanted to create a welcoming atmosphere to put everyone at ease prior to the shoot. It was



Meryl Hansen



Maggie Riley



Connie and Merlene Williams

also a great opportunity to come together, yarn and have fun. We had a wonderful, talented photographer, Melanie English, who volunteered her time to facilitate the shoot and take the photos. The shoot went really well and Mel ended up with 33 beautiful images to choose from for the upcoming exhibition.

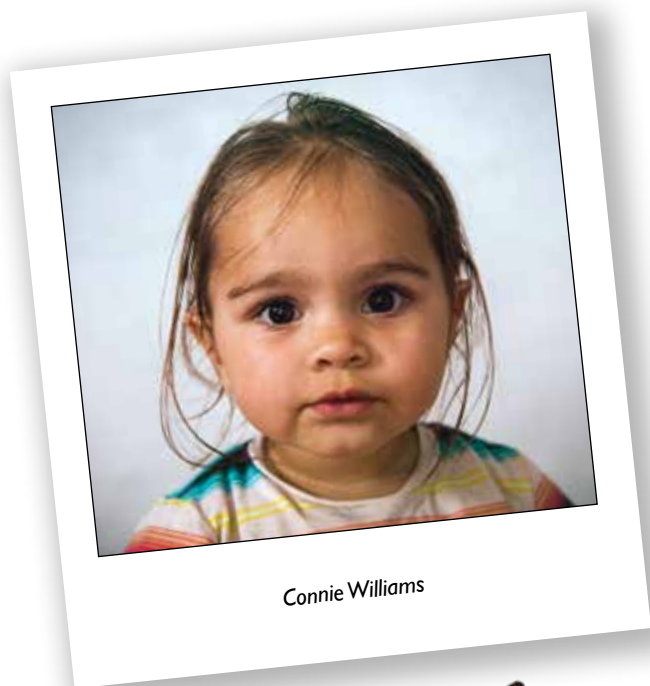
The exhibition was titled "Because of Her We Can" and held at the Katanning Art Gallery in the Shire building. The Shire were really supportive of our project. As they have set times for NAIDOC exhibitions each year, we were able to secure the spot this year. James who runs the gallery was tasked with framing and displaying all the photos and he did an amazing job. The end product was visually stunning.

Behind every photo is a unique story. Each person featured in the exhibition had something to say about what the exhibition and the theme of NAIDOC meant to them, and we displayed these statements in a catalogue. We named the catalogue "Moordij Yorgas, Celebrating Indigenous Women in our Community" and it featured comments from the girls and women about the strong women in their lives who have influenced them. Their stories also included what the NAIDOC theme meant to them. It was powerful to have these significant words accompanying the photographs.

The exhibition was scheduled to run for two weeks from the 9th to 20th of July, but it ended up running longer because the exhibition following ours cancelled at the last minute. We were happy to keep the beautiful images exhibited for a week longer! The Albany Advertiser also got involved and promoted the upcoming exhibition for us on Facebook, so we had a steady stream of visitors viewing the exhibition daily. We actually had the third highest amount of foot traffic in the history of the gallery, which equated to 22 people a day come through the doors.

And because of that...

it was such a privilege to be involved in this project. I had the opportunity to get to know the women and hear their stories which was inspiring. What really came across is people's strength and their ability to make the best of tough situations. These women are bringing up beautiful, strong girls and it fills me with hope that this project can go a small way to breaking down barriers and stereotypes. We received a lot of positive feedback, particularly from non-Aboriginal people who had attended the exhibition. Comments such as, "We didn't realise what these ladies have been through and just how beautiful they are, we need more positive images of Aboriginal people out there."

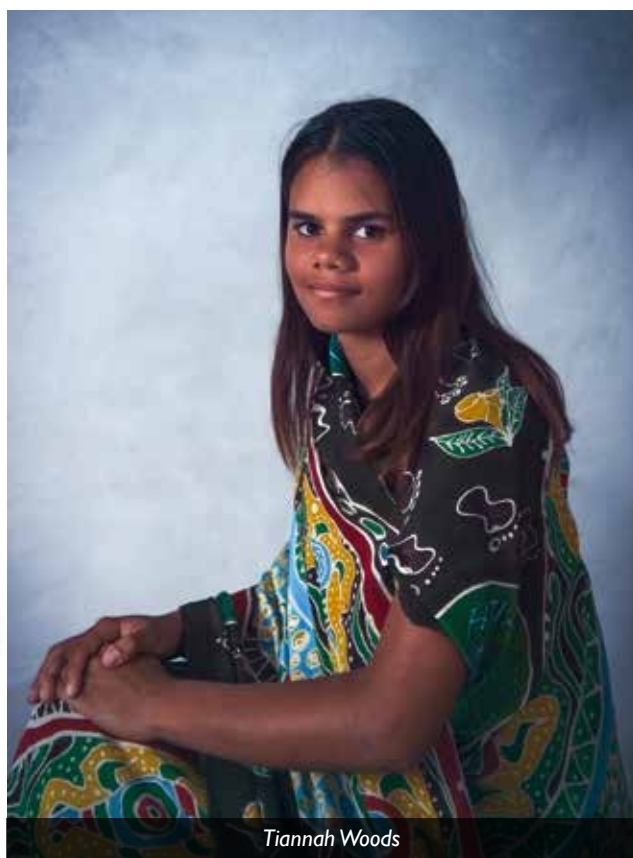


Connie Williams



For the girls and women involved, there were different reactions. For some it was quite confronting and emotional seeing their own images up so close, particularly the close ups of the women's eyes. These particular photos are really intimate and powerful, they show who the person is. I don't think the women who participated expected the images to be so confronting. Others were incredibly moved by seeing their own images staring back at them. The photos really do speak to the audience and shows the strong bond between family members. There is one of a mother and a daughter looking at each other and the daughter is gazing up into her mum's eyes and the photo has captured that love so clearly; it is a very poignant photo. Several of the women commented that they were surprised that people wanted to look at their photos.

Others were being recognised on the street with people saying, "We saw your photo and you're so beautiful." It was incredibly positive and wonderful for the women to be acknowledged in this way. At the conclusion of the exhibition, we held a little closing ceremony and several girls from a group run by Wanslea called "Sista's Stand Tall" played music for the visitors. The girls had been participating in a program called "Drum Beat" for a number of weeks and it was a great performance opportunity for them. It was a perfect end to the exhibition.



Tiannah Woods

And since that day...

this wonderful project exceeded all our expectations. We have plans in place to run this project again as it has been so well received. We'd like to involve a lot more people and expand it to incorporate men. There is an area just out of Katanning called Marribank, which is a place where children were taken when they were removed from their parents, so it has a lot of history in terms of the Stolen Generation. It was also previously run as a Baptist Mission. One of the women who we photographed lived there with her family and ran a tourist venture teaching people Aboriginal silks and artworks.

One of our ideas was to visit the area to photograph people, particularly Elders who had lived at Marribank, to share their stories. Once the photos are exhibited, the idea would be to download an app. on your phone which enables you to listen to the person's voice in the photo telling you their story. Although this idea is probably not achievable short-term, we are hopeful to run the Marribank exhibition in the next two years. With such a positive response from our recent photo exhibition, and the powerful impact it has had on the women and girls involved, we are excited by what we can accomplish next.

COMMENTS FROM THE GIRLS AND WOMEN ABOUT THE STRONG WOMEN IN THEIR LIVES WHO HAVE INFLUENCED THEM.

“My mum is a strong woman because of all that she went through. I believe that a strong woman is someone who has gone through a lot in their past and they are still fighting, standing strong.”
Ebony Riley

“My mum was a strong Noongar woman. She taught me everything I know. I’m a strong woman because of her and my dad. I’m strong because I’m a mum, aunty, cousin, sister and daughter. Being a mum is a tough job, especially when you’re young. I try and take life one day at a time.” Merlene Williams

“My grandmother is my inspiration. She was a very independent woman who raised seven kids on her own. She was a selfless person who put her family first and helped others. She inspires me to be a strong independent woman. I want the same for my daughters.” Kellie Woods

“Mum is a good singer. She lets us sleep with her. She has beautiful eyes and she is happy. She teaches us how to grow up, to read and to sing.”
Mia Riley

“Mum is beautiful. She cleans, looks after us and gives us a feed. She plays with the dog outside. She wears beautiful earrings and when she plays scary games with us she screams. She prays for us.” Maggie Riley

“My mother was a strong woman in every way because she raised us when times were tough and we lived in camps. She educated us about how to live in the bush. She taught us to respect our Elders and the important things in life like how to treat others. She sent us to school because she felt it was important to be educated. She didn’t have that opportunity. She inspired me to be a strong woman. I am 65 and I’m fortunate to still be working.” Marie Abraham

“Be proud of who you are...I always try to tell others that we should try and help people. What you see on the outside is not always what is going on, on the inside. Everyone has a story... because of her I can.” Meryl Hansen

“Mum is a role model to me. She is funny, kind, beautiful and strong. She has to be strong for us kids.” Tiannah Woods

“Growing up my mother was my inspiration and my role model and a great source of wisdom, knowledge and strength. I remember I would look at her in total ‘awe’, awe that whilst she was providing for her children – she was also working fulltime in many different jobs over many years. I remember thinking ‘why’ is she always on the go, ‘why’ is she always going to meetings, ‘why’ is she always working – all while raising her family. She then returned to university as a mature aged student and was the first Aboriginal person living in the Great Southern to gain a university degree. WOW was I impressed! I remember thinking ‘why’ does she do this, ‘why’ is she always working, tirelessly working! Then I grew up and became an adult, a Mooditj Noongar Yorga (strong Aboriginal woman) and I now understand all the reasons ‘why’ she tirelessly worked. It was to build on making not only my life better but to try and improve the lives of ALL Noongar people young and old, male and female. ‘And it’s because of her – my mum – I can.’” Hazel Ealem

“What really came across is people’s strength and their ability to make the best of tough situations. These women are bringing up beautiful, strong girls and it fills me with hope that this project can go a small way to breaking down barriers and stereotypes.”



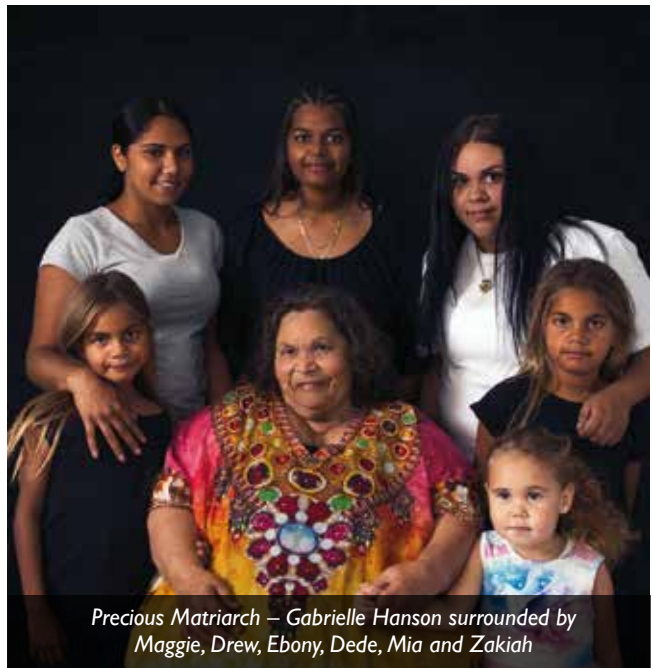


Hazel Ealem



Marie Abraham

“We received a lot of positive feedback, particularly from non-Aboriginal people who had attended the exhibition. Comments such as, “We didn’t realise what these ladies have been through and just how beautiful they are, we need more positive images of Aboriginal people out there.”



Precious Matriarch – Gabrielle Hanson surrounded by Maggie, Drew, Ebony, Dede, Mia and Zakiah



Gabrielle Miller



Maggie, Ebony and Mia Riley

SISTERS STAND TALL

ORGANISATION NAME:

Wanslea

CONTACT PERSON:

Brianna Williams

EMAIL:

BWilliams@wanslea.asn.au

PROGRAM / PROJECT PARTNERS:

Wanslea

KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:

Brianna Williams

KEY WORDS:

Youth, relationship building, self-esteem, culture, mentorship, healthy lifestyles, culture, connection, role models, employment, training, life skills, positive futures

About the Storyteller...

Brianna Williams is the Resource Worker at Wanslea Family Services.

About Sisters Stand Tall...

The aim of the Sisters Stand Tall program is to help build confidence and self-esteem in young Aboriginal women aged between 11 and 16 years, and to encourage and support participation in education. This includes supporting the transition from Primary to High School and into further education and training. Sisters Stand Tall programs offer mentoring support for youth and their families, and promote a greater sense of respect and connection to family, culture and community through music, dance and other healthy activities. Participants are exposed to Aboriginal role models within their community as well as other respected members and support networks. Wanslea provide a similar group for the boys. We also facilitate a program called Lift Off to Learn which supports families to get their children reading ready for school.



Girls making scones with Brianna Williams

Once upon a time...

around four years ago, Wanslea identified that there was a gap in programs in Albany for Primary and High School aged girls, so we implemented a program specifically for young Aboriginal women aged 11-16 years, and called it Sisters Stand Tall. The name reflects our philosophy which is to ensure our girls stand tall and take pride in themselves and their culture. The objective of the Sisters Stand Tall program is to help build confidence and self-esteem in the girls, and to encourage and support participation in education - including the transition from Primary to High School and into further education or training.

We have a good relationship with the schools and work closely together at the beginning of the school year to enrol the girls in the program. Currently we have 15 girls in the program. If we have over 15 girls enrol, we ask the school Principals who they think will benefit most, which is how we determine who we offer the places to. As our funding is based on helping young people stay at school, we will often

offer the places to the students with the lowest attendance rates. We keep a wait list of girls who can enrol if someone drops out. Sisters Stand Tall is implemented in both Albany and Katanning and has now been running for four years.

And then one day...

we run the program from the Wanslea building on Thursday afternoon's from 3:30 – 5:30pm and currently, the numbers are quite consistent with all 10 girls attending. We have a seven seater vehicle to transport the girls from school and then home once the afternoon program is finished.

When the girls first arrive they have a nutritious afternoon tea and we sit around having yarn time. We talk about our week and what's been happening in our lives, and then we do an activity together. During the activity we talk about bullying and other issues that may be affecting the girls. They are pretty comfortable with us and happy to talk about many personal subjects. We have a lady from Palmerston Drug and Alcohol each week who provides drug and alcohol awareness and mentoring. We also bring in agencies such as Aboriginal Health to discuss topics such as safe sex and mental health issues. For example, headspace have run mental health workshops for the girls which have been really helpful in getting them to open up. When they talk about what they are thinking and feeling, if we feel that they want to discuss it in more depth or need more support in that space, we offer a one on one mentoring session. The girls are really



Girls learning about culture from their grandmothers at the Noongar fish traps

open to listening to the service providers. We also have Elders drop in to spend time with them and provide cultural input. Local Noongar artists have taught the girls painting and weaving, and explained the cultural and historical elements of the artefacts, which is really important as it provides the girls with a deeper knowledge of cultural protocols. This helps to enhance their understanding of Aboriginal culture and where they come from.

We do have some girls who don't want to attend school, so we go and talk to them in their homes.



Freedom and fun at the beach



Girls showing their weaving project; baskets made using tea tree and string

This helps to encourage them to attend the group which is really positive as they mix with the other girls and develop friendships when they do come along. The flow on effect from this is their desire to attend school becomes stronger because they want to maintain the friendships. We also find that the different age groups all get along well and mingle with one another.

We really try to encourage input from the girls so they feel a sense of ownership over the program. Every term we talk about what rules everyone should abide by while they are attending the program. The girls discuss this and develop rules that they feel are fair. They also put the effort in to make the place their own by putting their photos and artwork up on the walls so they feel connected to the space.

And because of that...

this program is beneficial in many ways. It helps to build the girls' confidence. Not all of the girls have great role models in their lives. So when they are attending our program we try to provide as much positive reinforcement as possible. This program is important so the girls have something really positive in their lives. It's an opportunity to talk, connect, laugh and develop new relationships. When they first attend they are really shy and by the end of the year they are all much more outgoing and self-assured. These attributes are also developed through other activities we provide. We have brought both dance

and singing teachers in to do some lessons with the girls. They have now performed at several NAIDOC events and at the local schools.

We also had local band Essence do several singing lessons and work with the girls to write a song, which was called "Because of Her We Can", in keeping with this year's NAIDOC theme. The lyrics of the song were around the importance of the girl's mums, grand mums, aunties, sisters and other female role models in their lives. They have now performed this song 10 times in different locations around Albany. During NAIDOC week they performed in the schools for their fellow students and also at the NAIDOC opening in front of the Mayor of Albany and invited guests. It was a really exciting experience for them. They had a lot of positive feedback from community members which was fantastic for their self-esteem. Performing in front of an audience really helps to overcome the shame factor.

And since that day...

Sisters Stand Tall has gone from strength to strength since we started it and we are very proud of how engaged the girls are with both the program and each other. We believe it is vitally important to provide less structured activities and opportunities outside of the school environment which allow the girls to develop their social skills, gain self-esteem and build their confidence in a safe, culturally appropriate space.



Local Noongar artist Donna Williams teaching the girls how to paint landscapes using red, black and yellow



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



Girls rehearsing for NAIDOC event



Team building games in the park



Girls performing the song they wrote at the NAIDOC event in Albany

ROELANDS VILLAGE

ORGANISATION NAME:

Roelands Village Woolkabunning Kiaka

CONTACT PERSON:

Les Wallam

EMAIL:

les@roelandsvillage.com.au

PROGRAM / PROJECT PARTNERS:

Woolkabunning Kiaka Inc has a range of partners that support the organisation through investment into the property and farm, program partnership delivery, pro-bono work or volunteering: Indigenous Land Corporation, Outback Academy and the Red Dust Healers, Southern TAFE, Allens, Engineers Without Borders, South West Development Commission, Noongar Land Enterprise, First Peoples Disability Network Australia, Australian Paralympic Committee, West Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council, University of Western Australia, Curtin University

KEY STAFF/PEOPLE INVOLVED:

Les Wallam

KEY WORDS:

Aboriginal cultural heritage, healing, community, training

About the Storyteller...

Les Wallam is the CEO of Roelands Village.

About Roelands Village - Woolkabunning Kiaka...

Woolkabunning Kiaka means “We’ve Been There, Left and Returned to Seven Hills”. The property was originally a farm used also as a Mission to house children removed from families from across Western Australia. At times the Mission had more than 100 Aboriginal children living there from all over WA. Woolkabunning Kiaka Inc’s main purpose is to provide opportunities for guests and visitors to Roelands to interact with and learn about the Roelands Mission story and Aboriginal cultural heritage – while providing opportunities for Aboriginal people to take responsibility for our future.

Once upon a time...

Roelands Village was formally called Roelands Mission. Originally, the property was a farm which was used as a mission to house children who had been removed from their families across Western Australia. The property is located on the Collie River in the Bunbury region of WA and set on 500 acres amongst the picturesque Seven Hills. Today Roelands Village is a nationally significant heritage site.

Roelands Village was previously owned by the Church of Christ. It had been gifted to the Church by caterer and philanthropist Albany Bell in the 1970’s. Bell’s vision was that it would be available for the use and benefit of young Aboriginal people on an ongoing basis. However, in 2004, the Church put the premises up for auction, sparking a reaction amongst those of us who had a connection to the property and an investment in seeing it remain the vision of Albany Bell. We gathered a group together and unanimously decided that we did not want to see the property auctioned off to private investors. There were a lot of people who were interested in buying it. The group, led by Elders, wanted it back in their care. We were aware of the acquisition process through the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) and enlisted their



Outside our main hall



Accommodation at Roelands Village

support. Fortunately, the ILC decided that they would support us and in 2004 they purchased it for 1.8 million dollars and we reacquired it.

And then one day...

today, the property is owned by the Indigenous Land Sea Corporation and leased and run by Woolkabunning Kiaka Inc which is a registered charitable Aboriginal incorporated organisation. Its purpose is to represent the children who had been placed at Roelands Mission throughout the

1940-early 1970's as part of the protection and assimilation policies of the day. At times there were more than 100 Aboriginal children living at the Mission for many different reasons. The very first group of children placed at the Mission from the Pilbara region were part of the Stolen Generation. They were placed here as part of the assimilation policy which was a process of removing children from their families.

The aim of Woolkabunning Kiaka Inc is to provide opportunities for guests and visitors to interact with and learn about the Roelands Mission story and Aboriginal cultural heritage, while also providing opportunities for Aboriginal people to take responsibility for our future. Membership to Roelands Village is available to all ex Roelands Mission children and their families.

The Woolkabunning Kiaka Committee of Management is made up of nine board members and includes former residents and family members. There are three staff in the management team including myself. I am the CEO of Roelands Village and have been for 10 years. A lot has changed since I've been here and we are continually improving the services and working towards our goals. This includes creating opportunities in education, hospitality, health services, employment and housing for the community.

Roelands Village offers numerous opportunities, particularly for our young people, who are our primary target group. Our programs are open to all



Les Wallam



The Seven Hills



Roelands Village



The view from the top of the property

community members and people of all ages. We are diverse in what we offer and in the skills we teach people. Our programs include both practical and knowledge based workshops, including leadership programs, emotional healing, land management, horticulture and building construction to name a few.

One of our programs, the Red Dust Healing program, deals with the effects of rejection and teaches specific tools so people don't transfer the feelings and emotions associated with rejection onto others, particularly people they are close to. The full program runs for three days and participants can stay at our premises while they complete it, if they choose. This program, which I've sat in on many times and supported the delivery of, is very effective and has a strong impact on people.

I aim to provide a balanced view about people's experiences growing up at Roelands Mission. There are those who love it here and still call it home who come back whenever they can to participate in activities and bring family back. However there are those on the other end of the scale who are so traumatised that the mention of Roelands Mission makes them break down and cry. The Healing Program is designed for those who have difficulties reconnecting with Roelands Village due their experiences growing up here as a child. The training we offer is available to all sectors of the community,

however we particularly target our Aboriginal community to become involved. We also extend the invitation to various other agencies and organisations.

TAFE students studying horticulture attend as part of their course and the agreement stipulates that they work on projects to maintain the property, whilst learning new skills, so it's a mutually beneficial arrangement.

It's an excellent training ground for the horticultural students who focus on land management including surveying the property, including the boundary, the fencing, the underground services and weed eradication. They absolutely love it as they get to spend time on our beautiful property, gain new skills and complete their training.

We also facilitate work for people in Correctional Services who are required to complete community hours. Correctional Services are self-sustainable in terms of their operation, they bring a bus and a trailer fully equipped with their machinery and we allocate work and away they go.

Although we don't receive operational funding, I am required to apply for funding to run the different programs including our training programs. We rely greatly on volunteers to help facilitate our programs. Roelands Village is also a tourism venture and we

offer a range of accommodation options. Our 15 houses are located in the central village precinct surrounded by Roelands Farm and the Seven Hills. We offer a large function venue and commercial kitchen that can accommodate up to 100 people. We are also available to host conference bookings.

And because of that...

whenever people visit us, either as tourist or through a work or study placement, we spend time explaining about both our history as Aboriginal people and of the Mission, about colonisation and its ongoing impacts and how and why it is still affecting people today. This is a really important aspect that oversees our work, to foster a greater understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. From the beginning, the most important objective was to maintain the history of Roelands Village and keep the stories alive. The focus is to provide education and information to support Aboriginal communities. We all are part of one community, and we all have to be involved in order to make positive changes.

Many older people often have ingrained ideas and attitudes which we are trying to change. We've had quite a few non-Aboriginal people visit to hear our stories about the Mission and listen to our messages including several men from the local men's group. The manager was keen to bring the old fellas here so they could gain some insight into our history and hopefully change their attitudes. When they visited, the staff (Francis and Sid) did a presentation for them, which included how Roelands Village was run, their experience growing up here as children, their personal stories and what we are trying to achieve today. Some of these gentlemen who had a lifetime of fixed attitudes and ideas, were in tears, saying, "We had no idea about any of this." They were very moved, so it's extremely important and worthwhile to share our history with people.

And since that day...

our vision for the future is to implement a three year training program for young people to ensure they acquire the skills to be able walk into employment opportunities. We feel that offering longer term programs to build up people's skills and confidence would be beneficial. A lot of young Aboriginal people struggle to gain employment and often give up. We want to support them through the process to achieve a different outcome. Although not everyone will need that duration, if they can find employment before the three year period then that would just be

a bonus! Our model is natural growth and we feel it's a unique but important approach.

Roelands Village Outback Academy is also currently setting up a board of management who will provide professional advice and managerial support to Woolkabunning Kiaka Inc. It will establish enterprise and business development to support the social needs of the community.

We currently require more resources and staff to support management. We operate on minimal staff and although we get paid for a certain amount of hours, we work mostly voluntary. We have a small team of consistent volunteers who are passionate about our philosophy and core business which is extremely valuable as it ensures we can run our programs effectively. There is a lot of scope for growth at Roelands Village so the focus going forward is on creating more employment opportunities on site so we can keep facilitating our important work.

"Whenever people visit us, either through a work or study placement or as a tourist, we spend time explaining to them about our history as Aboriginal people and the history of the Mission, about colonisation and its ongoing impacts and how and why it is still affecting people today. This is a really important aspect that oversees our work, to foster a greater understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people."



To find out more about Roelands Village or to book accommodation visit:

<https://www.roelandsvillage.com.au/>

THE VANCOUVER STREET FESTIVAL SONG PROJECT

ORGANISATION NAME:

The City of Albany's Vancouver Arts Centre

CONTACT PERSON:

Matt Ward

EMAIL:

matt@vpinitiative.com

PROGRAM / PROJECT PARTNERS:

The Vancouver Street Festival Song Project was assisted by the Australian Government through the Department of Communications and the Arts' Festivals Australia program, and is supported by the Department of Local Government, Sports, and Cultural Industries through the Community Arts Network's Catalyst Fund

KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:

Matt Ward, Averil Dean, Lester Coyne, Marianthe Loucataris, Jonathan Brain, Lindsay Dean

KEY WORDS:

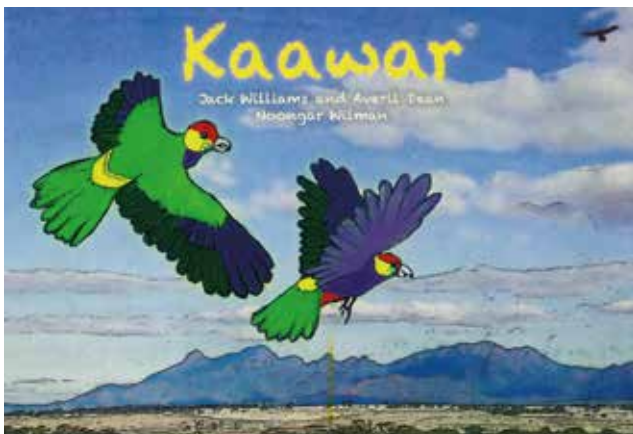
Music, choir, collaboration, culture, Dreamtime stories, song writing, singing, community, performance

About the Vancouver Street Festival Song Project...

The Vancouver Street Festival Song Project was created and coordinated by Marianthe Loucataris who was the Project Coordinator at the City of Albany's Vancouver Arts Centre. Her role was to increase the representation of Noongar culture within the Vancouver Street Festival which is an annual Albany event.

About the Storyteller...

Matt Ward was raised in regional WA and now leads an international career as a Creative Director and singer. Holding a Masters of Vocal Performance, Royal College of Music, London, Bachelor Classical Voice, West Australian Academy of Performing Arts, Certificate II Music Theatre, West Australian Academy of Performing Arts and Italiano Elementare I/A2, Centro Firenze (Florence), Matt is experienced as a singing teacher and vocal consultant. Matt has performed in over 150 venues in Australia and the UK.



Once upon a time...

The Vancouver Street Festival Song Project was created and coordinated by Marianthe Loucataris who was the Project Coordinator at the City of Albany's Vancouver Arts Centre. At the time she was working closely with local Elders Lester Coyne and Aunty Averil Dean to increase the representation of Noongar culture within the Vancouver Street Festival which is an annual Albany event. This year's event was comprised of various Aboriginal singers and musicians from across the Great Southern region who formed a band to perform different musical sets during the festival.

To complement the band, I was brought on board as Musical Director/Composer to work with the the Elders to facilitate the creation of a new song. However, through consultation with different people,



Preston Clifton, Tahleah and Racheal Colmer in rehearsals for Kaawar song



it transpired that it would be better to create an intercultural song to bring the whole community together. The idea was that people of all ages and cultures could come together to celebrate a Noongar Dreamtime story without differentiation or segregating into 'groups'. Our aim was to engage with choirs and singers across the Great Southern region which would culminate in a performance at the Vancouver Street Festival. For this particular project, Aunty Averil Dean wanted to share the Dreamtime story of the Kaawar through the song - which is a story passed down through her ancestors. In Noongar language and culture, the Kaawar is the red capped parrot. As the story goes, a flock of Kaawar were flying through the Stirling Ranges and were hunted by the wedged tailed eagle. As the eagle tries to attack them, they crash into the side of the Stirling Ranges but manage to keep flying and as they do, they scrape past and up the side of the mountain.



Sheyan and Shantay Tidswell sing Kawaar song

If you visit this site today there are paths and rocky outcrops going up the side of the hill which is the path the Kaawar made.

As the facilitator, I wanted to ensure that the project appealed to people of all different ages and ability levels. It was important to make it possible for school children to be involved and equally, to ensure people who had been singing in choirs at an advanced level also had the opportunity. The project needed to be accessible, appealing and challenging for the broadest demographic possible.

And then one day...

we held in excess of 30 workshops in school and community choirs in Gnowangerup, Kojonup, Mount Barker, Denmark, Cosy Corner and Albany. I facilitated two workshops with each group and other people who turned up on the day. Aunty Averil Dean and her son Lindsay came to each group at least once to introduce the project and its importance, discuss the Dreamtime story and talk about their culture and life experiences. I would then teach and rehearse the musical component with the group or choir. Aunty Averil Dean brought in two young female soloists, Shantay and Sheyan Tidswell, whom she had taken under her wing. The sister duo had been performing at various events around Albany and were starting to become well known. They had been endeavouring to write their own songs for a while so this was a great opportunity to hone their writing skills and get some more performances under their belt.



“To see the Dreamtime story of the Kaawar turned into a song and performed by 150 people to thousands of other people was a really wonderful, experience for all involved and it was especially emotional for Auntie Averil Dean.”

Shantay and Sheyan were involved in what we call a “facilitated devising process.” This involved meeting with Auntie Averil Dean, myself and an Aboriginal singer called Rachael Colmer along with Marianthe Loucataris from the Vancouver Arts Centre. We devised words and ideas, emotional responses to the Dreamtime story and different ways of telling the story. We also did a musical improvisation based on some of the words from the song. After the workshops took place I had a portfolio of different texts and musical ideas which I was able to arrange into a song, and with the help of Jonathan Brain, it became the Kaawar song. As a result of these extensive workshops, 150 people came together at the street festival to perform Kaawar. The song was predominantly sung in English with one line in Noongar language. The two soloists sang the one line in Noongar language which translated to “the Kaawar made the path with its shins.” The Noongar language is an endangered language and Auntie Averil talks about how when, growing up on the missions her family was discouraged from speaking the language.

As a result, she didn't grow up speaking the language. But in adulthood together with her late brother Jack Williams, they produced the Kaawar book, and having it turned into a song is a testament to their legacy and passion to preserve and promote the Noongar language. There were a lot of positive outcomes from those meetings and subsequent workshops. They provided an excellent opportunity for Auntie Averil Dean to be able to connect with different singing groups around the region. I was overwhelmed by how valuable those rehearsals were and how receptive people were to her life story and the importance of the Kaawar story.

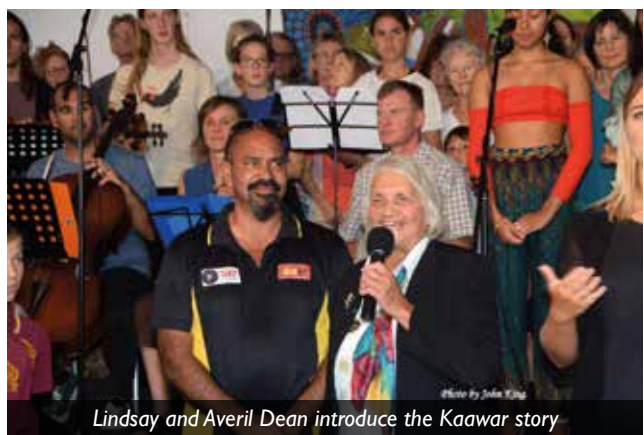
And because of that...

we performed our brand new song Kaawar in a giant marquee in the centre of Albany during the Vancouver Street Festival. With Albany's ever unreliable weather, we had planned for the music to take place under the marquee in case it rained. There were 150 performers on stage and we had all these enthralled school children on either side and in front of the stage singing along and a huge audience in the marquee. As the crowd was so big, there were thousands of people outside who unfortunately couldn't really see the performance but they could certainly hear it! As part of ensuring this project was accessible, we worked with an AUSLAN signer who taught the Primary School students the song in sign language which was really beautiful. What surprised me was the adults wanted to learn the sign language as well. It was a wonderful, uplifting performance and the size of the crowd exceeded our expectations. To see the Dreamtime story of the Kaawar turned into a song and performed by 150 people to thousands of other people was a really wonderful experience for all involved and it was especially emotional for Auntie Averil Dean.

We have recently performed the song a second time with the majority of the choir members at the Albany Entertainment Centre at the premiere of the Noongar Boodjar documentary. This documentary was coordinated through the Community Art Networks WA (CAN) and featured the Kaawar song. After the documentary premiered we performed with the choir to a full house and all the performers from across the region were thrilled to have another opportunity to share the song with an audience.

And since that day...

the future looks bright for the Kaawar song. It has been incredibly well received by the community and



Lindsay and Averil Dean introduce the Kaawar story



Matt Reuben James Ward



Kawaar choir, soloist and musicians at the Vancouver Street Festival

we are currently looking at ways to make it accessible for other groups to learn. There was a lot of talk around the time of the music festival about including it in NAIDOC week which took place a few weeks after our performance. We didn't realise how popular the song would be so unfortunately we didn't have resources in place to make it available for other groups to learn in time to perform at NAIDOC. But we will be ready for next year! I'm very conscious about this song being a vehicle to facilitate different cultures coming together to collaborate and I'm a little bit hesitant about handing it over to groups of non-Aboriginal people. There definitely needs to be more discussions around that, because although I'm not an authority on this issue, my view is that this song and these types of projects should always be about helping people to collaborate and sing together, and have a common experience - rather than white communities feeling like they are being involved in something that is multiculturally diverse without being truly invested in reaching out.

The telling of this story and performance of this song was a very precious process for Aunty Averil Dean. She had been working on a language revival project (which is still ongoing) with her brother who has now sadly passed away. He had been instrumental in bringing the Kaawar Dreamtime story back into the public realm through the publication of the storybook of the Kaawar, so the creation of this song and subsequent performance saw the project come full circle. Music and song is such a powerful

medium to express language and stories and share culture. It's exciting to see where we can take the Kaawar song next and how we can build upon this project utilising other ancient Dreamtime stories from Noongar culture and heritage. I've since worked again with Aunty Averil Dean, Lester Coyne and Eliza Woods to create a large-scale musical performance bringing recognition to the contributions of Aboriginal servicemen in WWI and WW2. Every time we meet we are thinking of more ideas, but one thing we can say is that the Kaawar is still flying high and you might hear it soon.



“The telling of this story and performance of this song was a very precious process for Aunty Avril Dean. She had been working on a language revival project (which is still ongoing) with her brother who has now sadly passed away. He had been instrumental in bringing the Kaawar Dreamtime story back into the public realm through the publication of the storybook of the Kaawar, so the creation of this song and subsequent performance saw the project come full circle.”

POORNARTI ABORIGINAL TOURS

ORGANISATION NAME:

Poornarti Aboriginal Tours

CONTACT PERSON:

Joey Williams, Catherine Mercer

EMAIL:

book@poornarti.com.au

PROGRAM / PROJECT PARTNERS:

WAITOC, ATEC

KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:

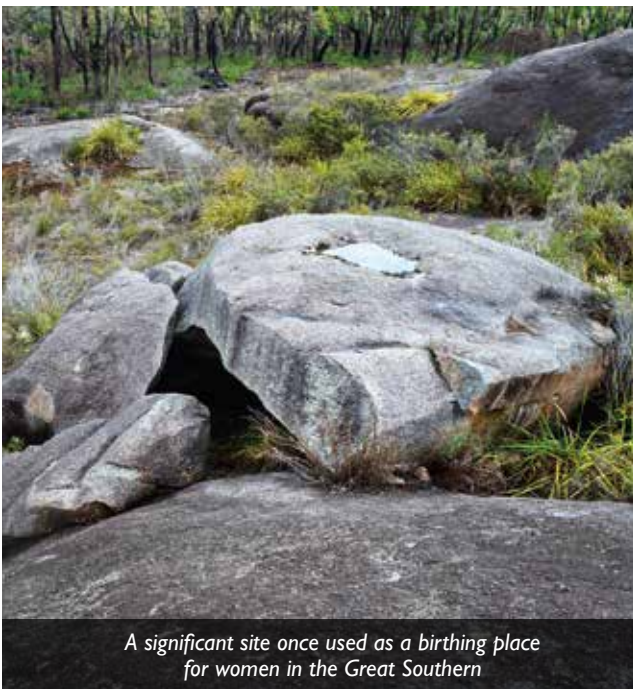
Joey Williams, Catherine Mercer

KEY WORDS:

Aboriginal law and culture, Country, community, reconciliation, art, education



Joey's art (took him about 15 minutes to paint this beautiful picture!)



A significant site once used as a birthing place for women in the Great Southern

About the Storyteller...

Joey Williams (Pongilli) has been a cultural advisor in the Great Southern Region of Western Australia for many years and has had a strong and varied involvement in the arts, schools and within his community. He has been a cultural educator and art lecturer at TAFE for nine years and has been instrumental in fusing the reconciliation process throughout communities in the region.

Catherine Mercer (Purrung) spent many years in Scotland, dedicated to promoting its true Indigenous culture, working with Clann Wallace, and in service to the film and television industry. Since coming to Australia she has worked in the arts, community services and conservation and is currently a mentor for Noongar youth. She is passionate about preserving local Indigenous culture.

About Poornarti Aboriginal Tours...

Poornarti Aboriginal Tours has sprung from the passion of Aboriginal Elder and Law man Joey Williams, and his drive to share his Noongar culture and knowledge. Poornarti was the name of Joey's father, Jack Williams Poornarti, a Kaarl Poorlanger (people of the fire) man of the Koreng tribe.

Joey learned the ways of his people through spending time with his father and listening to his stories, and Joey's mother Joan passed on her intimate knowledge of bush tucker and medicine to him. Through instruction from his renowned Noongar artist Auntie, Bella Kelly, Joey himself has become talented in this field and has won numerous art awards. Joey has also mastered the ancient technique of vibrational healing passed onto him through his ancestral lineage. Listening to the old songs of Country has also inspired Joey to write and sing his own traditional Noongar music and songs.



Poornarti
Aboriginal Tours





Joey telling stories through sand drawing



Once upon a time...

we came up with the idea to offer Aboriginal cultural tours in Denmark several years ago. Joey Williams, local Aboriginal Elder and Law man from the Stirling Ranges was keen to start a tourism business venture to share his culture with people. So, we started off running informal tours and named the business Poornarti Aboriginal Tours after Joey's father, Jack Williams Poornarti - which means magic fire stick (or people of the fire) in Noongar.

In the very early days we had a girl attend a tour who really enjoyed it and she suggested that we package the tours to make them accessible to the public, which we thought was a great idea. The first step toward making the business a reality was to buy a van. As Joey is a spray painter and panel beater by trade, he was able to design and paint the signage on the van. We then organised the formal business registration, designed and printed brochures and created a website. That was it, we were in business! At that early stage we hadn't thought much beyond those initial start-up processes but as we progressed we realised there was a lot more involved than buying a van and getting brochures printed.

And then one day...

initially our marketing plan consisted of distributing our brochures and an occasional advertisement in the newspapers. We then applied for an initiative called the Aboriginal Tourism Development Program through Western Australian Indigenous Tour Operators Council (WAITOC). We had approached Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) and various other bodies for funding but it was proving to be too complex. However, the process of getting on board with WAITOC's program was very simple and straightforward. We are currently in the last year of a four year mentorship with WAITOC who have been instrumental in marketing us. They also accelerated our learning in tourism because we didn't know anything about the industry when we first started. We knew about culture and people but tourism was a whole new ball game, so it was a really big learning curve. WAITOC's mentorship has been integral to our progression and their inside tourism knowledge has been invaluable. One of their really useful strategies was to send us on tours so we could familiarise ourselves with other companies' products to see how things work.

Initially, our tours had content but not structure, so it took us a while to work out the logistical elements such as when to schedule coffee breaks and toilet breaks and how to ensure that people were comfortable. WAITOC helped us through this



process, but a lot of it also came naturally because it was about being authentic. It was important to us that we had authenticity as well as knowledge.

We now offer several different tours; the Kwoorabup or Kinjarling Day Tour, the Stirling Range Day Tour, the Vibrational Healing and Water Nurture Tour and Soul Camps. We also offer an option to “Create your own customised tour”, including Welcome to Country ceremonies, Corporate Cultural Awareness, W.A. Schools Cultural Curriculum Delivery, Private Family and Groups or Cultural Events i.e. NAIDOC, Australia Day.

And because of that...

all of our tours are pretty popular. The Soul Camps are more in depth than the three hours tours. They run for six days and five nights and participants are immersed in culture, where they see and experience a lot of different things. We take a maximum of 20 people into Koi Kyeun-ruff Stirling Ranges to several different sites. Mount Trio Bush Camp and Caravan

Park is our home base and from there we drive out to the sites each day. Some of these sites include Joey's old camp, Biddjinup camp site, Split Rock and the Ochre Pits. We also go into a little school where all the Noongar people used to camp for years but never went to because it was a white school for the farmer's children even though it was on traditional land. In the morning, we have a big breakfast cooked up by our chef, welcome everybody to Country, go out on a bush walk, look for bush tucker and medicine and take our participants' on a journey. Each day is different and each day brings something unique.

In Joey's words:

“I've been teaching culture most of my life. My dad started culture instruction in Primary Schools around 55 -60 years ago and I wanted to carry on his journey. My dad was a powerful man, a proud man, he gave everyone a go. He wanted everyone to know that he was a teacher and people understood in the end that he wanted to share his knowledge, no matter what colour or creed you were.



Joey showing visitors sacred sites

“It didn’t matter if you were a nasty person or a disrespectful person, he still wanted to share his knowledge with everybody and bring people together.

“One of the main reasons I wanted to share my culture is because I believe we all have to learn to live together, and one way to do that is to share knowledge, not only my culture but everybody’s. As Noongar people, we were brought up differently, we have a different way of life, just like people who come from the other side of the world. We are incredibly different culturally, and at the same time, we are all humans so that level of understanding can definitely be reached through transferring of knowledge. That’s why my father felt it was so important to share his knowledge with everybody. Now, it’s important to me to carry his legacy on.

“If people who come on the tours can take away one little thing from the experience, that’s all I hope for, that’s satisfaction enough for me. I always say an experience is better than a present. An experience stays with a person. When you share your knowledge with someone and see them happy or smiling, that makes me feel good about what we are teaching people.

“There is a lot of content in our tours. We offer vibrational water healing which is a technique passed down through my ancestors and also traditional reconnection smoking ceremonies. I bring my ancestors in through the smoking ceremonies. I believe that our tours and the content we offer is authentic. I’m not into accolades but we do get a lot of positive feedback, people really love it.”



Joey Williams

And since that day...

our business continues to be steady. We have people from countries all over the world who come on our tours including Italy, South Africa, Denmark, Switzerland, Sweden and Germany, among others. We also host a lot of people from Scandinavian countries. One of the first tours we ever ran was for a group of 40 geologists and four professors from Germany. They travelled to Denmark to do a tour in the Stirling Ranges and we took them into the Ochre Pits so they could study the colour changes in the rocks. We held a big fire ceremony that night, it was a special night and a memorable tour.

The other aspect of our business is running cultural workshops at the local schools. Joey has been facilitating the Strong and Proud Program whereby he teaches students about culture after school for two hours on a Monday. This program has been running successfully for four years with the Noongar High School students who nominate to be involved.

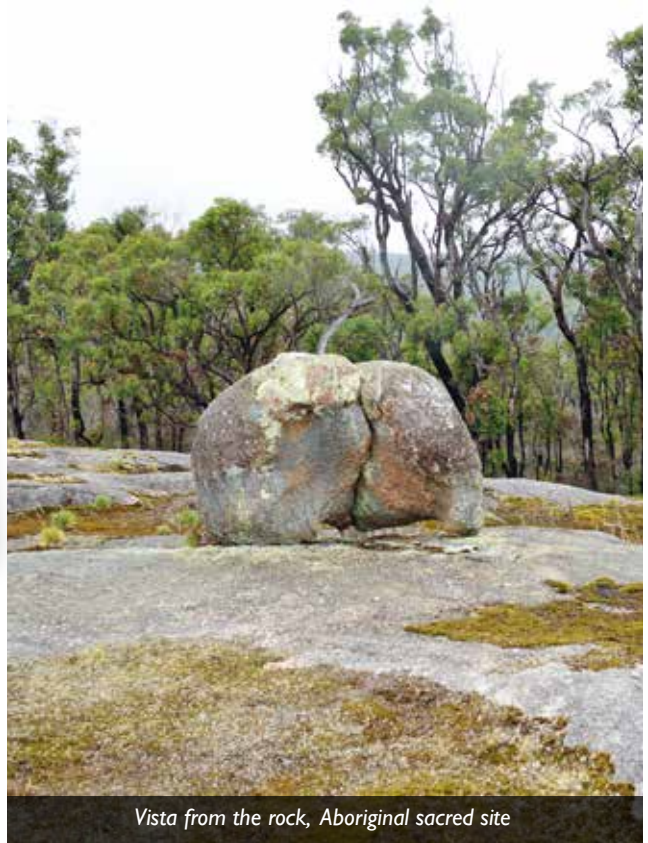


Joey painting on the tour underneath a rock formation

During this workshop Joey mentors young Noongar people to extend their cultural knowledge and develop a stronger sense of pride in their culture and themselves.

We also recently facilitated a Caring for Country roadshow throughout the Great Southern region and we taught 950 students in three days, which was busy but fantastic! The students got a lot out of it. In addition, as Joey is an artist he works with High School students to run painting art workshops and is also often commissioned to paint artwork on school and hospital walls in Denmark.

We are happy with how our business is progressing and love what we do, it's a privilege to share our ancient culture with the world. As there are only two of us, we don't actually have a succession plan at this stage and we have to keep the business sustainable so no Poornarti Aboriginal Tours franchises just yet! But we do have plans. We'd like to eventually offer longer experiences with the Soul Camp, and capture more corporate clients. That's an especially essential market to tap into because we feel that people need to get out of their offices, into nature and experience something different and unique that allows them to reconnect with Boodja, Mother Earth. As Joey says, "You were not born into this world, you were born from and by it, as a leaf from a tree, and as a breeze from the sky...."



Vista from the rock, Aboriginal sacred site

"One of the main reasons I wanted to share my culture is because I believe we all have to learn to learn to live together, and one way to do that is to share knowledge, not only my culture but everybody's."



If you'd like to know more or book a tour go to:

<http://poornarti.com.au/>

THE EMERGENCE OF STRONG FUTURE LEADERS

ORGANISATION NAME:

Great Southern Emerging Leaders Group

CONTACT PERSON:

Stuart Roberts

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roberts2009@live.com.au

PROGRAM / PROJECT PARTNERS:

Great Southern Community and Services Providers

KEY STAFF / PEOPLE INVOLVED:

Emerging Leadership Group

KEY WORDS:

Emerging leaders, collaboration, resilience, mentorship, community

About the Storyteller...

Stuart Roberts is an emerging Noongar leader from the Great Southern region of WA. Stuart has links to many of the family groups of the area and is a well-known and respected community member.

About the Emerging Leaders Group...

The Great Southern Noongar Emerging Leadership Group is committed to working with all Great Southern Noongar communities and people to create an environment of unity and trust, where today's youth are empowered to lead healthy lives and create their own positive futures through strong leadership, collaboration and purpose.



Stuart Roberts

Once upon a time...

we established the Great Southern Noongar Emerging Leadership Group in 2016. We have 22 members and we represent families and communities in the Great Southern. The group is comprised of Aboriginal people aged 20 to 45 years. We get together to talk about issues affecting our people, usually on a quarterly basis but also as needs arise.

It's quite a unique group with a positive outlook. Our aim is to identify and focus on the needs affecting our

communities and on issues we all agree upon. We are seeing a shift in thinking in what we are trying to achieve through the Emerging Leaders Group. We want a democratic approach ensuring everyone has an understanding of the stakeholders in the region and to build healthy relationships with communities. Strong and healthy relationships with communities are the mechanisms we use to bring people and services together to ensure sustainable change.

The philosophy behind the Emerging Leadership Group is to make things more transparent and accountable, and change the unhealthy approaches taken in the past. We want to instil that together, we can achieve and benefit more, as individuals, as families, as communities and a Noongar nation, when we combine our energies and resolve for a good cause.

During the meetings we have an agenda and take minutes. We build an educational component into each meeting which is generally focused on developing the skills of our 'young leaders', increasing their capacity and awareness of the world around them, and good governance practices.

We try to organise the meetings so that we have a rotating chair, and each member gets the opportunity to chair the meeting or take minutes for the day. We use this opportunity to upskill and build the



GSNELG & WAPOL regional partnership meeting

confidence of our members and ensure meetings are always productive.

One of the focuses on our agenda is to discuss key issues affecting our people regionally. A major focus has been the prevalence of methamphetamine in the community, particularly amongst our young Aboriginal people. The national statistics report that there's a decline in this demographic but the Aboriginal community strongly believes the numbers are actually increasing. We can see the impact first hand, it's a prominent and visible problem amongst our youth and young adults, and it is very concerning.

And then one day...

as this is such a concerning issue, we decided to tackle it head first. As a group we felt there was not enough being done. So, in April 2018, we decided to run the first ever March Against Meth community event in Australia. We walked the streets with over 200 people which for a first-time event, was a great turn out.

Families and friends who had been devastated by methamphetamine joined us at the event. We received national recognition and state media coverage from the ABC, The West Australian Online, GWN7 and The Albany Advertiser. It was the first



“One of reasons that we established the group is to invest in our future leaders. It’s really important to hold events such as this, as they provide a platform and opportunity for our emerging and future leaders to organise, lead and be the spokespeople for an important event.”

time a group of young Aboriginal leaders from our region had led a community event, and both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people joined in from surrounding towns and communities.

A mix of key guest speakers including health professionals and representatives from support services attended to discuss the problem and the statistics around methamphetamine. The police also spoke passionately about the issue and a minute's silence was observed. Key service providers set up stalls so they were available to answer people's questions and build awareness amongst the community about their services. Their other aim was to explain to people how they approach breaking down the stigma associated with accessing these services.

The March was a really important event because we didn't feel that there was a suitable response to the issue that we were seeing in our community. We are very proud of this achievement, particularly since it was the first one in Australia. We took a stand and made a positive contribution to our community in an area which is complex and significant to all Australians. We pushed through and ran our event against the odds and received a fantastic turnout and substantial media coverage. What we've been able to do as a group, in its early stages, has been great. We didn't have a budget for it, but we had like-minded individuals who were passionate and wanted to make a small contribution to their community. We were supported by local services who pitched in on the day to make it all possible. We now hope to turn March Against Meth into an annual event.

And because of that...

one of the reasons that we established the group is to invest in our future leaders. It's really important to hold events such as this, as they provide a good platform and opportunity for our emerging and future leaders to organise, lead and be spokespeople for change.

In starting this initiative, we really had to reflect on the question, "What does it mean to be an Elder?" "What does it mean to be a leader?" This question was initially brought up with the Elders and leaders in the region about six years ago, when the idea was first formulated. It was an important question to ask because we had government organisations asking us, "Which Elders do we speak to? Which leaders do we speak to?" It became evident to our group that there



"It's an exciting time to be a part of the Great Southern Noongar Emerging Leadership Group because it has the potential to achieve monumental growth, change and unity for our people in the Great Southern."

was no clear understanding or definition of what made an Aboriginal leader or Elder. It was important for us to consider these roles and establish a framework to support development of future leaders, especially considering the significance of what these positions represent.

Back in 2017 we decided to conduct consultations with communities in the region to ask the question, "What does being a leader or an Elder mean to you?" to the Elders and leaders we were able to speak to. Everyone had really great answers, but they were all different. We are hoping to upskill the next generation of leaders who are emerging with a greater understanding of their roles and responsibilities in society, armed with information and the important qualities to be effective voices and advocates for their communities.

And since that day...

this project is quite exciting in terms of the potential. We've linked in with great people and organisations willing to offer their support including Roy Tester from Relationships Australia. Last year I went to the Snake Conference in Canberra which is a national Aboriginal/Islander Conference and the focus was on the Stolen Generations and children being removed from their families. There were presenters

from all over Australia talking about their programs and approaches to these issues. Roy Tester was one of the Key Note speakers and his presentation really resonated with me and I felt I had to invite him to speak to our Emerging Leaders in the Great Southern. Roy came down and spoke with our group and shared great insight into past Aboriginal policies and the history of our people and imparted some valuable knowledge to our young leaders. This was important because when we are making decisions and advocating for our people, we need to be armed with information about the impact that our history has had on people and the ongoing affects today.

We are always looking for opportunities to equip us with knowledge so when it's our time to step up, we can make informed decisions based on having an understanding of what drives our people and the challenges we are facing today as Aboriginal people.

Our aim is to build our young leaders so they have the tools to be effective in leadership roles, not only to be good people but be able to think strategically, be able to negotiate and have good community development skills to lead. It's also vital that they develop strong relationships and the trust of the people so that they are comfortable to approach us.

As a people we know what our community needs are and how things should be done, but sometimes the biggest barrier we face is the lack of relationships and trust between each other. Shifting mentality is a big thing to do but it's really important. One of the negative forces that affects our people is fear. Fear of missing out, fear of being let down or fear of being left behind. If we can support people to deal with their fear by giving them the means and channels to achieve their goals, then it helps them to move forward in a way that's empowering and allows them to determine their own destinies.

Our group exists as a separate entity, we are not governed by an organisation; we are an independent voice for the people. It's important that we maintain our independence so we can continue to be neutral and be driven by the needs of our people. This group is also important because it gives our people hope. I think it is valuable and important to share what we are doing as we believe we can help and hopefully inspire other regions who feel they don't have a clear vision.

We recently held the second March against Meth community event in Albany and the atmosphere and

cohesion was once again very strong for such an important issue. It's an exciting time to be a part of the Great Southern Noongar Emerging Leadership Group because it has the potential to achieve monumental growth, change and unity for our people in the Great Southern.



"It's important that we maintain our independence so we can continue to be neutral and be driven by the needs of our people. This group is important because it provides people with hope."



ARTISTS DELLAS AND KORRINE BENNELL ... IN OUR WORDS

CONTACT PERSON:

Dellas Bennell

KEY WORDS:

Art, painting, portraiture, exhibitions, history, culture, family, inspiration



Blue Sea Turtle by Dellas Bennell



Korrine and Lera Bennell

About the Storytellers...

About Dellas Bennell: Ms Dellas Bennell is a proud Wadandi and Baiyungu woman born and raised in Bunbury WA and proud mum of one daughter and two sons.

Dellas's paintings are mostly inspired by her Noongar and Yamatji heritage focussing on the coastal lines and beautiful wildlife of turtles, birds and dolphins. Dellas also displays a confidence in her heritage using other contemporary forms of art from her latest artwork 'Birak from the sky', displayed in the 2018 Fremantle Revealed Exhibition and other works in the Noongar Country Art exhibition at the Bunbury Regional Art Galleries.

About Korrine Bennell: Ms Korrine Bennell is the daughter of Dellas. With links to this Country via her parent's heritage, Korrine has grown up surrounded by rich culture and family knowledge. With a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Visual Arts, Korrine enjoys sharing her artwork with her community. Most works are of portraiture, however recently she has been incorporating both landscape and portraiture. Korrine also had artworks displayed in the 2018 Fremantle Revealed Exhibition. She also has works in the Noongar Country Art exhibition at the Bunbury Regional Art Galleries.

On becoming artists...

Dellas: I first started painting in the late 80's, I was around 17 years old. I always liked art and drawing at school, but began to love art when I was a part of an Aboriginal Dance Development group that allowed me to do art as an elective in my diploma. This was the beginning of my love for acrylic paints which is my main art medium.

My uncle and aunty encouraged me to learn more about painting. Uncle taught me how to mix and blend colours, but my favourite technique he taught was marbling. I like marbling as it is my way of representing landscapes or ocean scenes, as I love being outdoors. After the marbling has been completed on the canvas, I usually paint realism ovetop such as native birds, flowers, dolphins or turtles. Painting in this style helps me stay connected to Country. As an Indigenous woman I like to use my art as a cultural way of

storytelling that emphasises caring for Country and the need to preserve and protect beautiful Australian animals and their habitats.

Looking back at my artwork over the years, I can see my growth as an artist. Now, I can see colours better and I am more confident in mixing and painting which is a process that took me 20 years.

Korrine: I have always loved art as it has always allowed me to express myself. As long as I can remember, my mother Dellas Bennell has painted and her artwork has always been an inspiration to me.

I have been drawing ever since I could hold a pencil. With a love for Disney characters and cartoons, I would try and draw characters freehand without tracing. As I got older, my skills got better and I started



The Maidens by Korrine Bennell

to draw from memory and imagination. I say my art style is realism portraiture.

The process...

Dellas: We paint in different styles and have our own approach to art. Korrine can finish a painting in four hours, whereas it can take weeks for me to complete one. I often wonder what I am going to paint and once I start and get closer to the finish, I realise that the end result is completely different, however much better than I expected. I like to 'just go with the flow' when it comes to my artistic expression.

Art is so relaxing. I'll paint while listening to 80's music which is very soothing, it gets me in a place of no worries about stress, bills or illness. You just sit down, have time for yourself and feel happy.

Korrine: I paint from my imagination, I don't like to copy. Sometimes I use someone posing to make sure I have the correct body structure, but everything else comes from my mind. Art is my therapy. When I'm feeling stressed, I draw and it makes me feel better.

Being an artist is similar to being a writer. Authors get writer's block and I feel that artists get 'artist's block' with creativity. When this artist block happens to me, I try to listen to music, mostly 80's music just like my mum.

I feel confident drawing with pencils and charcoals, but I want to learn more about acrylics. My mum is teaching me how to use acrylics and what techniques provide the best effects.

On family history and inspiration...

Dellas: I get inspired by my daily life and the love for my family and my partner. I have three children; Korrine, Brandon and Ethan who are also artists in their own right, and have their own creative styles and techniques. I am very proud of them.

Travelling is also a big inspiration. When I see scenery, I think, "Oh that would look nice as a painting," and then I'll think about what techniques to apply.

After returning from a holiday trip to Coral Bay and Carnarvon, which is my late dad's and grandmother's Country, I decided to paint something new. I wanted to paint a turtle after seeing several while snorkelling on the Ningaloo reef. This painting has a special place in my heart, it is a part of my journey of going back to Country and reminds me of my father. It is not for sale, even though I have had offers.

I'm also inspired by the stories from my parents, grandparents and great grandparents. Continuing to tell stories through art about my Noongar and Baiyungu



Dolphins by Dellas Bennell

heritage is very important to me as it is a celebration of my culture.

Korrine: Travelling is the same for me. Going on trips back to my dad's Country in the Wheatbelt and listening to stories inspire me to create artworks from a different era. My paintings are mostly of Noongar history, with portraits of characters who lived in another time. I feel that my art can provide recognition of our people's histories and culture.

My painting of the Noongar warrior is one my favourite pieces. Before completing this painting, I was playing with charcoal and acrylic paints on the canvas and thought that I'd like to draw a strong warrior. I wanted it to represent the resilience of our people. I feel that this painting has taught me a lot about myself and my creativity. All of it was drawn and painted from my imagination.

Members of my Walley family were a part of the Stolen Generation. My grandmother Norma was put into New Norcia Mission. Hearing her talk about her experiences and the travelling through different scenery and Country makes me think, "My ancestors would have seen the same thing I'm looking at now and I'm able to put it into artwork."

I'm also inspired by the Noongar six seasons and how they influence the different colours in my artwork. Each



Dellas Bennell paints – Photo credit Felicity Ford

season has a unique affect on the lighting of skin tones and scenery. I love to say, "This is painted with winter colours, or Makuru colours to be precise". When I was younger, I was very frightened of using colours and I always stuck to graphite pencils and charcoal. But ever since studying at university and listening to mum's advice, I have learnt to appreciate colours and how they can help my artwork become more vibrant.

On exhibiting their art...

Korrine: I like entering my artworks into local exhibitions. In 2016, I won the Youth Award at the Bunbury Regional Art Galleries' Noongar Country Exhibition for my painting The Maidens. This was a complete surprise as there were so many other talented Noongar artists.

Last year, mum and I were grateful to be chosen to exhibit our artwork in the Fremantle Arts Centre Revealed Exhibition in 2018. As part of this exhibition we were also invited to have a stall at their WA Aboriginal Art Market. This was great exposure for



Dellas Bennell - Photo credit Felicity Ford



Coming Home by Dellas Bennell -
Photography by Felicity Ford

our artwork and it was awesome to share stories and culture with people from all over the world.

Dellas: I sold two of my pieces at the Revealed Exhibition which was an excellent platform to promote my art to a wider audience. I paint something and I'm putting it out there and I'm thinking, "Is anyone going to like my art?" It's a part of me. Some of my paintings I did not want to let go, but I've got to the stage where I want to share my art with everyone.

Being part of the Revealed Exhibition provided the opportunity to have my art shown at Yagan Square in Perth. Seeing my art displayed on the big screen made me so happy.

Korrine: I was also a part of the + Five Edith Cowan University South West Graduate Exhibition in 2017. I enjoyed this exhibition as it was the end of my university journey that I had shared with my peers. I would never have graduated without the love and support of my family and my fiancé Damien.

On future plans...

Korrine: I am an ECU graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Visual Arts and I am employed as a graphic designer, however I would love to learn more about other art styles.

In 2016, I created a Facebook page which we named Karrak Designs, the Noongar word for red tailed cockatoo. Social media is a great tool to gain a larger audience and once we created Karrak Designs, it became successful. The page was flooded by people

from all over Australia with requests for art and graphic designs. Most requests were done voluntarily. I would like this page to keep growing and gain more followers.

With regards to the future, I would like to paint my Baiyungu family's history, which will be very exciting.

Dellas: I have many plans for the future. One of those plans is to have a solo exhibition and maybe take that exhibition on tour. I will continue to paint and try other art mediums as well as enter more exhibitions and competitions. But most importantly, to enjoy life surrounded by family and friends.

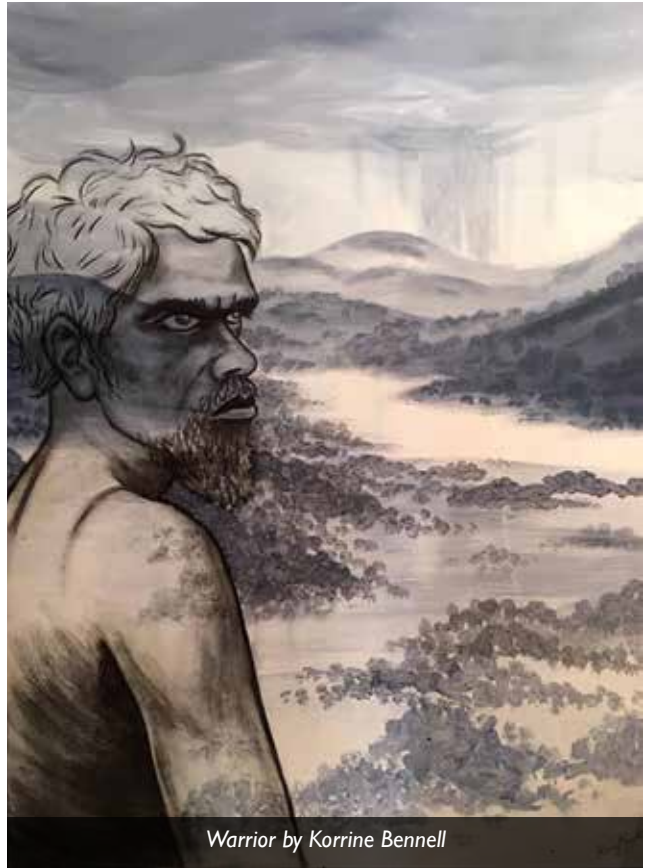
"I get inspired by my daily life and the love for my family and my partner. I have three children; Korrine, Brandon and Ethan who are also artists in their own right, and have their own creative styles and techniques. I am very proud of them.

Travelling is also a big inspiration. When I see scenery, I think: "Oh that would look nice as a painting," and then I'll think about what techniques to apply.

I'm also inspired by the stories from my parents, grandparents and great grandparents. Continuing to tell stories through art about my Noongar and Baiyungu heritage is very important to me as it is a celebration of my culture." Dellas



Two worlds by Korrine Bennell



Warrior by Korrine Bennell



“Travelling is the same for me. Going on trips back to my dad’s Country in the Wheatbelt and listening to stories inspire me to create artworks from a different era. My paintings are mostly of Noongar history, with portraits of characters who lived in another time. I feel that my art can provide recognition of our people’s histories and culture.” Korrine



Find us on Facebook:
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Credits:
Photos by Felicity Ford Photography



Coral Bay from the Sky by Dellas Bennell

LERA BENNELL MY STORY

CONTACT PERSON:

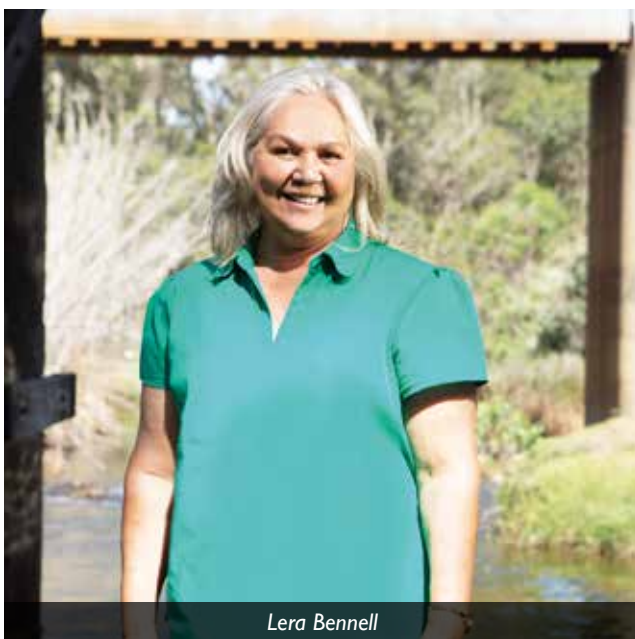
Lera Bennell

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lera.bennell2@bigpond.com

KEY WORDS:

Culture, tradition, history, family, education, politics, community, working life, role model, Elder



Lera Bennell

Once upon a time...

I was born in 1951 in Pingelly District hospital in the Wheatbelt region of WA. My father is Henry Bennell and my mother is Violet Bennell (nee Hill) (both deceased). I am one of ten children and when I was young we lived in Pingelly on my grandfather's private block, which he had saved hard to buy and was adjacent to the reserve. My grandfather, Charlie Hill, built a church on his block of land, with the support of the local Pastor from the Baptist church in town. We enjoyed attending church a lot during my childhood and going to Sunday school with our cousins. We grew up with Christian values, which is still a strong influence in my life today.

My dad worked as a shearer and labourer and travelled to all the farms within the districts of Pingelly, Brookton, Pumphrey's Bridge, Popanyinning, Wandering and Boddington. The whole family went with dad wherever he worked and we camped on the farms or set up our own camps. If we had to camp on the side of the road, dad would just get the branches off the trees and throw them down to

About the Storyteller...

Lera Bennell is an accomplished member of the local Aboriginal community and has held senior roles in community managed organisations for most of her life. She is a recognised Elder and has been instrumental in progressing initiatives that have furthered the economic and social development of her community.

make our beds. I loved sleeping under the stars. We were a very close-knit family and stayed together throughout the hardships of surviving day to day in those times. We travelled around a lot to many places for seasonal work and I attended several different schools. Having a strong work ethic and getting an education were very important values to my parents. I started school in Year 1 at Burekup Primary School. In Burekup, we had a permanent camp set up on an old gravel pit adjacent to the Collie River, 15km out of Bunbury and close to the school. I remember as kids we all worked hard picking spuds with mum and dad and we travelled for seasonal work all over the Southwest, which complemented dad's shearing work in Pingelly.

When the railways opened up Dad was able to get a permanent job at Fernbrook, near Worsley. Fernbrook was surrounded by bush and when we'd come back from school and there wasn't anything to eat, we would go hunting for kangaroos and rabbits. We ate a lot of rabbits and bush tucker, such as wild bush berries, wild honey and wild figs that grew along the creek bed. When we lived at the camp in Burekup the Collie River supplied us with marron and fish and sometimes at night, we'd go camping along the river bed to catch cobblers. We would walk down with our lights and make fires and have a great time. In the summertime, we would swim constantly in the rivers. This fresh bush tucker supplemented our government rations of flour, tea and sugar, which we collected in Dingo flour bags.

I have lots of wonderful memories of my childhood growing up. We had so much freedom and that community style living provided a lot of love and support. My parents were such a strong presence in my life and were a big inspiration and positive role models to me. Dad and his siblings were part of the Stolen Generation and he always made sure that we were protected. Dad was a Commissioner of Elders,



Lera Bennell with her grandsons, Brandon Bennell Yarran and Ethan Yarran

“The book contains both contemporary and archival photographs and personal accounts from our family members, sharing many of the hardships and discrimination that our family endured. Ultimately though, it’s a story of hope and survival. I am proud that we have this wonderful book that chronicles our family history for posterity. It can be read and enjoyed by my grandchildren and theirs for generations to come.”



more confident and better equipped to challenge the policies of the day that marginalised our people and to try to make a difference. It inspired me to be active in my community and volunteer my services.

appointed by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. He went out on Country with all the old blokes and they recorded a lot of the sacred sites and places of significance. My dad was a smart man, even though he never had the opportunity to learn to read and write, he knew his rights. He was a very strong person and he always stood his ground.

We were living in Darkan when I finished Primary School. I won the Darkan Junior High School Bursary award in Year 7, which meant I could attend Perth Modern School while boarding with a family in Subiaco. Even though I missed home and my family, I wanted to work in the city when I finished school. I spent a few years moving around and working in different jobs. Some of these positions included office work, shop assisting and nursing assisting. I met my partner in Perth and our daughter, Dellas, was born in Bunbury in 1971.

And then one day...

when my daughter was still young, my partner and I were accepted into the South Australian Institute of Technology’s Aboriginal Task Force, to complete a community development course in Adelaide. Undertaking this course opened my eyes to the struggles and the health, housing, employment and educational needs of our people. It helped me to feel

When we settled in Bunbury and I started work for the Crown Law Department in Probation and Parole Services, I gained an understanding of law and policy. I also gained insight into government systems when I worked at the Aboriginal Legal Service and the WA Police Department. My role as Managing Director of the National CDEP Magazine, and later registering our own publishing company Black in Business Pty Ltd, provided further knowledge, business skills and opportunities for Indigenous people nationally. In 2003 we were awarded the national Henry Mayer Media Prize for the Black in Business Pty Ltd magazine.

Education was also very important to me, as knowledge is the key to power, opens up opportunities and equips you to face the challenges in society. I completed a Bachelor of Applied Science in Aboriginal Management and Community Development at Curtin University in 1995. Later on, my interest in politics led me to undergo further study and in 2007 I completed a Master of Arts in Indigenous Social Policy at the University of Technology in Sydney. As well as these degrees, I attained many certificates in skills development. My employment and education experience provided the knowledge to advocate on behalf of my people to bring about positive change.

And because of that...

it was in 1980 that I first became involved in politics. A National Advisory Consultant Committee were looking for candidates to stand for Bunbury so I put my hand up. This started my involvement in politics and community advocacy. Over the following years I did a lot of community and voluntary work, organising conferences, workshops and sporting events, being on Noongar committees and always trying to move forward and help my people. I have always been very involved with sport and loved to play hockey, softball and basketball. I enjoyed being on many committees for the local sporting clubs.

I was involved with local and regional corporations, committees and councils. Locally, I was secretary/ treasurer of Bunbury Aboriginal Progress Association; first female Chairperson of Goomburrup Aboriginal Corporation; and chairperson of Bunbury Women Aboriginal Corporation (BWAC). I was one of the coordinators of the GWABA Indigenous Football Carnival which was a sporting initiative organised by BWAC. The regional community organisations I was a member of included Kaata-Wangkinyiny Regional Council (ATSIC) and Southern Aboriginal Corporation (Albany).

I was also a Director of the board for Noongar Employment and Enterprises Aboriginal Corporation (NEEDAC / CDEP). I was on the Newmont Boddington Gold Pty Ltd/ Gnarla Karla Booja Relationship Committee and am still currently on the Gnarla Karla Booja Working party as a Bennell family representative. My most recent appointment is as a Gnarla Karla Booja Working party representative for METRONET Noongar Reference Group. Being involved in my community comes naturally to me because of my family. My dad and my maternal grandfather were very political and known as bush lawyers, so they were my role models and paved the way for me to be politically active.

I've recently retired as Board Director of Southwest Aboriginal Medical Service (SWAMS) which I have really enjoyed. It's been very rewarding being on this board because there is excellent vision and tangible outcomes for meeting the health needs of all our Noongar people in the South West and the Wheatbelt. I continue to serve on committees and boards and always try to contribute to my community.

And since that day...

our family has such a rich history that in 2017, we decided to work on publishing a book to preserve some of our stories. The Community Arts Network West Australia (CANWA) was publishing books at the time and had written one on the Wheatbelt. When I saw how beautiful it was, I asked if we could collaborate to publish one about my mum and dad and our family history. The book titled "The Gravel Pit - Our Stories - Family Footprints from Burekup to Bunbury" was published in May 2018 by CANWA. It tells our family story - the story of Charles Hill and his wife Rachel (nee Abraham), their 14 children, and subsequent generations, who now comprise much of the Aboriginal population of the South West region.

The book contains both contemporary and archival photographs and personal accounts from our family members, sharing many of the hardships and discrimination that our family endured. Ultimately though, it's a story of hope and survival. I am proud that we have this wonderful book that chronicles our family history for posterity. It can be read and enjoyed by my grandchildren and theirs for generations to come.



"My dad worked as a shearer and labourer and travelled to all the farms within the districts of Pingelly, Brookton, Pumphrey's Bridge, Popanyinning, Wandering and Boddington. The whole family went with dad wherever he worked and we camped on the farms or set up our own camps. If we had to camp on the side of the road, dad would just get the branches off the trees and throw them down to make our beds. I loved sleeping under the stars. We were a very close-knit family and stayed together throughout the hardships of surviving day to day in those times."



The gravel pit – *our stories*

Family footprints from Burekup to Bunbury



This is the story of Charles Hill, his wife Rachel (née Abraham), their 14 children, and subsequent generations, who now comprise much of the Aboriginal population of Bunbury.

It is the story of one Noongar family's struggle to maintain some level of autonomy from government control in the south-west of Western Australia during the 1950's, as told by the direct descendants of Charles and Rachel.

At stake in this struggle was the freedom to move, the freedom to work, and the freedom to maintain possession of their children. They had to fight to maintain elements of traditional life under the increasing pressures of government control over Aboriginal people resulting from the enactment of the 'the 1905 Act' (the *Aborigines Act 1905*) and subsequent *Native Administration Act 1936*, both of which had the explicit purpose of legislating for increased control over the lives of Aboriginal people.

PICTURED
Charles Hill

*Have you
got a great
story?*

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

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

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

<http://www.phaiwa.org.au/indigenous-storybook/>

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

