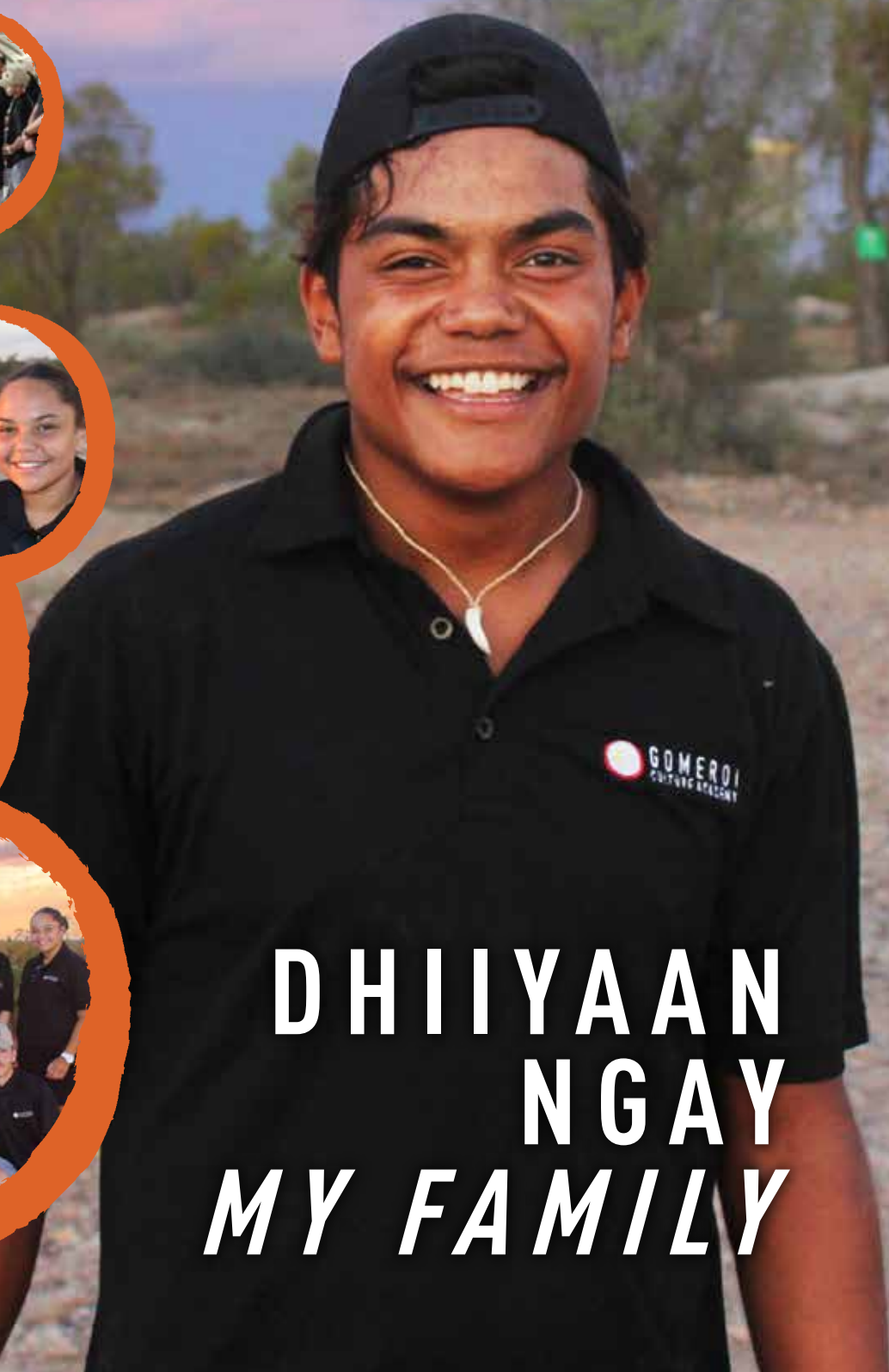


# Giirr Maaru

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM GOMEROI CULTURE ACADEMY JULY 2018



## DHIIYAAN NGAY MY FAMILY



**GOMEROI**  
CULTURE ACADEMY

*Creating a generation of  
culturally strong leaders in our community.*

# On Country Learning

## MOREE AND LIGHTNING RIDGE

Term 2 started with an On Country Learning experience, where students visited a number of special places and people, that share the importance of family within Gomeroi Country.

Our first stop was a visit to the Dhiyaan Centre in Moree. Thank you to the amazing staff who took the time to give us a VIP tour of the centre, and to run an insightful family research workshop. Using the resources provided, students found photos and information on members of their own families who they had never seen before.

While in Moree, students visited Terry Hie Hie – a place that is connected to many of their families. Walking around the Aboriginal Area at Terry Hie Hie, students not only learned about the role that 'Missions and Reserves' played in our family's history, but also the strength, courage and resilience that was needed to keep our culture and our families alive.





After leaving Moree, we made a quick stop at Collarenebri and made our way to Lightning Ridge where we met Tom Barker. Tom and the Barker family run their own cultural centre called 'The Goondie', where they share culture, photos, and the history of families around the region. Tom guided us through The Goondie sharing stories of his mother and father, and emphasised the importance of never forgetting who we are and where we have come from.

Tom also took us to his wood carving workshop, where he gave us an insight into his life and how he has become one of the most sought-after wood carvers in the country. When requested for a demonstration, Tom showed his skill by crafting a 'boondi' in a matter of minutes which he gifted to one of our students. Before we set our eyes for home, we visited the mulga scrub and Coocoran Lake.

Spending time On Country and visiting community was an experience that we will never forget.

The trip not only gave us a better understanding of the role that we all play in recording history and sharing our stories, but it also brought us closer together as a group.



# GATHERINGS

Following on from our On Country Learning excursion we have spent the term focusing on family history, and using the knowledge of our past to reinforce the strength that we have within.

During our Gatherings, we visited sacred sites where we shared some of the stories of Gomeroi Country. This provided the opportunity to better understand the role that story telling plays in our lives and culture. Students used this motivation to research and record information from their own family members, by spending time sitting down with parents and grandparents to hear their stories. Some of the students were able to go back 6 and 7 generations on their family trees.

During this process, some of the students could retrace their individual totems and skin names, as well as reintroduce their family into their kinship structure. Ensuring that their family will always know and be able to share their cultural identity with future generations.

Each student has been working to create their very own visual display of their family history and share what they have learned this term. Their works will be on display at the end of year presentation to share with their family and friends.





## MENTORING

With the support of the mentors, students have been working throughout the term on their Cultural Learning Plans areas of focus. This term there has been two major areas of focus chosen by the students, one being weaving and the other being wood carving.

The girls have begun to learn the process of weaving and have learned how to identify different weaving plants and grasses, how to source the right parts of the plant to use for weaving, and understand the steps required to prepare the plant for weaving. Students then learned some of the different techniques of weaving and have created their very own baskets made from paper raffia.

The boys have been focusing on their goals around wood carving with local wood carver Tom Flanders. Together they have been spending time in the bush learning to identify different plants and understand their seasonal cycles. A variety of pieces of timber have been collected and completed a didgeridoo, a carved bowl and a set of boomerangs.

Mentoring has been an important part in giving time needed to develop the skills to complete their final pieces by the end of the year.





## 180TH COMMEMORATION OF THE MYALL CREEK MASSACRE



Each year hundreds of people from across the country gather on the Sunday of the June long weekend to commemorate the unprovoked massacre of twenty-eight Wirrayaraa women, children and old men by a group of stockmen on Myall Creek Station in 1838.

This year marks the 180th anniversary of this horrific event.

Being a part of this Ceremony allowed students to understand some of the relationships between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people throughout our history, and efforts that are being made to recognise our past.



During the Official Ceremony students participated in a smoking ceremony, performed a number of dances, and went on the educational walk. They also heard a recounting of the events where a number of people shared their story of how the massacre and commemoration has impacted them.

# STUDENT PROFILES

**"CULTURE  
MEANS EVERYTHING  
TO ME. IT MAKES  
ME FEEL LIKE  
I BELONG."**



## DYONTAY SPEARIM

Dyontay was born in Tamworth, and is a year 10 student studying at Peel High School. He has three brothers and two sisters, and enjoys spending time with his family and friends.

Dyontay is committed to learning and sharing his culture, and has taken every opportunity to learn from his family, and cultural teachers within his community. He has performed Gomeroi dance at a number of events including CAPERS, Buundaagi and school assemblies, where he has begun to take on a mentoring role with the younger dancers.

Dyontay has set himself goals to understand more about language, and has committed to learning over 200 Gomeroi words, and 10 songs. He will also find ways to share this knowledge within his community, by continuing his leadership role within the school dance group, running dance workshops, and supporting young people in their learning. He is also learning the process and techniques needed to identify materials, and create artefacts such as clapsticks, boomerangs, and didgeridoos out of natural woods.

**"MY FAMILY  
MEAN A LOT TO  
ME, BECAUSE  
THEY GIVE ME  
STRENGTH."**



## OLIVIA FLETT

Olivia was born in Tamworth and is currently in year 9 at Peel High school. Olivia comes from a large family and has eight brothers and sisters. Olivia loves being surrounded by her family and friends, and enjoys playing rugby union with her friends for Peel High School.

Olivia has been attending Gomeroi dance workshops for the past two years, and has become instrumental in establishing the role of girls in dance and sharing culture, within school and the community.

Olivia is aiming to gain a better understand of the role that both weaving and language play in her culture. By the end of the year, Olivia will become more familiar with the process and techniques of weaving and will have created at least 2 of her own baskets and her own kurrajong skirt. Although Olivia is quietly spoken, she has challenged herself to not only build her vocabulary of Gomeroi words to over 100, but to also give a Welcome/Acknowledgement to Country at a school function and a GCA Gathering.

# THE GOMEROI CULTURE ACADEMY STORY

Gomeroid Culture has been passed down between generations for thousands of years. Story-telling, dance, and other cultural practices such as weaving, have been integral to the development of cultural identity and values for young people.

The GCA harnesses the strength and knowledge that exists within our community to support our young people. The individually tailored program and mentorship will enable participants to learn more about their culture, strengthen and develop their own identity, and have a greater opportunity for success.

The GCA is not an alternative to school. Our commitment is to work closely in partnership with schools and assist them to support students to flourish and be passionate about their future.

**Giirr Maaru**  
("gear-er ma-roo")

**THIS IS A POSITIVE PHRASE THAT MEANS WELL DONE, GOOD STUFF OR GREAT JOB. THE NAME HAS BEEN CHOSEN TO REFLECT AND RECOGNISE THE WORK THAT IS BEING ACHIEVED BY GCA STUDENTS WITHIN THE STRUCTURED ACTIVITIES AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS IN THEIR LIVES.**



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Gomeroid Cultural Academy has been designed and is delivered by the Gomeroid Dance Company and Yinarr Maramali, who have been, both formally and informally, mentoring young people in the local community for over a decade. Both the Gomeroid Dance Company and Yinarr Maramali are active members of the community and are passionate about inspiring our next generation of leaders. The Gomeroid Culture Academy is made possible by the ongoing and dedicated support of Joblink Plus.

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