

Giiir Maaru

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM GOMEROI CULTURE ACADEMY MAY 2019



GUURRAMALDANHA *STANDING STRONG*



GOMEROI
CULTURE ACADEMY

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

2019 Overview

WELCOME TO THE FIRST EDITION OF GIIRR MAARU FOR 2019 AND THE SECOND YEAR OF THE GCA.



This year we are looking to build on the success of 2018 and continue to support young people to develop a stronger sense of personal and cultural identity.

We were excited by the number and quality of applications to be a part of the GCA in 2019. Thank you to all the young people who applied. We have welcomed another 10 young people into the GCA family and have spent the term getting to know each other and build strong relationships already.

We would like to acknowledge and thank all the organisations that continue to support the GCA and mention Joblink Plus who is our major partner once again this year. The support of local schools has grown as we now have 4 schools who are supporting their students to participate in the GCA during 2019.

These schools are Peel High School, Tamworth High School, McCarthy Catholic College and Farrer Memorial High School. The GCA program is endorsed by the Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) and soon to be endorsed by the State AECG.



There are some exciting changes to the GCA in 2019, some of which are:

- Our program has been extended to support students over a two-year period. As well as working with the students from this year, we will be supporting the graduates from 2018, to identify new pathways of learning and growth on cultural, academic and personal levels.
- We now have a team of 8 cultural mentors, which will strengthen the support that we can provide for student's growth and learning capacity.
- One-day intensive GCA workshops will be offered to students in years 7 & 8 in schools across Tamworth. These workshops will be co-delivered by the GCA graduates from 2018.
- The time spent out On Country has been increased, seeing the addition of 5 days added to the annual calendar. This will increase the amount of time we can spend connecting to country and communities.

These changes will allow students to have an even more meaningful experience throughout their journey with the GCA, with more support for their current and future cultural, and personal learning.



ON COUNTRY LEARNING



Early in the term students were shown the importance of connection to Country and were taken to some of the different places of great significance around the Tamworth area. By being On Country, students began to understand the diversity within sites and visited different rock paintings, 'Dreaming sites' and unique ecosystems created from Ancestral stories. Visiting these sites gave us the opportunity to better understand the knowledge that is held within country and the landscape.

Students travelled to a special place called 'Moore Creek Caves', here they heard the story of how it was created and why it remains to be so significant. While at the Caves, students began to identify native animals and plants, and were shown how to source a variety of bush medicines. Students were surprised about the strength that is held in our native plants after tasting Gadibundhu (quinine), which is a special plant to Gomeri people and it left a strong taste in their mouths for many hours later.

Students also began to hear stories of Garriya (Rainbow Serpent) and learnt how these stories are shared and connected to other sites and communities across Gomeri country and across the state. Throughout the year students will be following the story of Garriya and many others and understand the role that they play in creation.



GATHERINGS

This year students have participated in a range of activities and experiences supporting them to gain a stronger understanding of who they are. During the Gathering, students have started to identify some of their own personal values and look at how these values impact their decision making and day to day behaviours and relationships with others.

Driven by the students, key values were identified and used to create a shared agreement for the GCA. This shared agreement outlines the guiding values and actions to be upheld by everyone associated with the GCA. These values include respect, trust, responsibility, sharing, listening and honesty. Throughout the year these values will be explored and connected to significant sites across the region.

As well as working towards better understanding of themselves, students have started to build and develop strong relationships with each other. During the Gathering students began to share their genuine feelings and ideas, this led to great conversations and the level of respect shown to each other was inspiring. Despite attending different schools, students are building strong friendships and are starting to connect with each other in their social lives.



MENTORING

Students have been working to create their Cultural Learning Plans which has identified cultural areas of interest, and have set goals for themselves throughout the year. Students have been paired up with specific Cultural Mentors to assist them on the learning journey within their areas of focus.

Students have highlighted a variety of passions they would like to pursue. Some of the goals created by students are to:

- Better understand the role that weaving plays in Gomerai culture and learn how to weave with natural and contemporary materials,
- Develop in-depth knowledge of native plants, their location, their uses and their stories.
- Learn the steps and processes to making a didgeridoo and learn the skills and techniques to be able to confidently play the didgeridoo.
- Better understand the meanings and purposes of art and learn the processes and techniques involved in creating an artwork.
- Build up vocabulary of Gamilaroi words and better understand the role that language plays in Gomerai culture.
- Better understand the importance of song and dance and the role that it plays in Gomerai culture.

Elements of what students have accomplished within their CLP will be on display at the end of year presentation, and students are excited to be able to share their journey with their family and friends.



ALUMNI



Building on the back of a successful 2018, last year's graduates will have the opportunity to continue to be a part of the GCA Program. With a strong sense of identity and self-awareness, our alumni will be supported to identify and pursue different learning pathways based on their individual aspirations.

During 2018, our Alumni wanted to find a way to make language and stories more accessible to community. This was their motivation in creating their own language resources. Besides sharing it with their schools at their Graduation Ceremony, students felt it would be great if the resource was available to younger children as well, to which they donated a full copy to the Birrelee MACS service in Tamworth.

Birrelee is an Aboriginal children's service that has been in the community for over 30 years and strives to provide meaningful culturally appropriate education to their students aged 0-5 years old. Birrelee's director Rachel Phillips said that they hope to use the Gomerai Language Resource to help share language and stories with their students to help build up their cultural identity.



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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