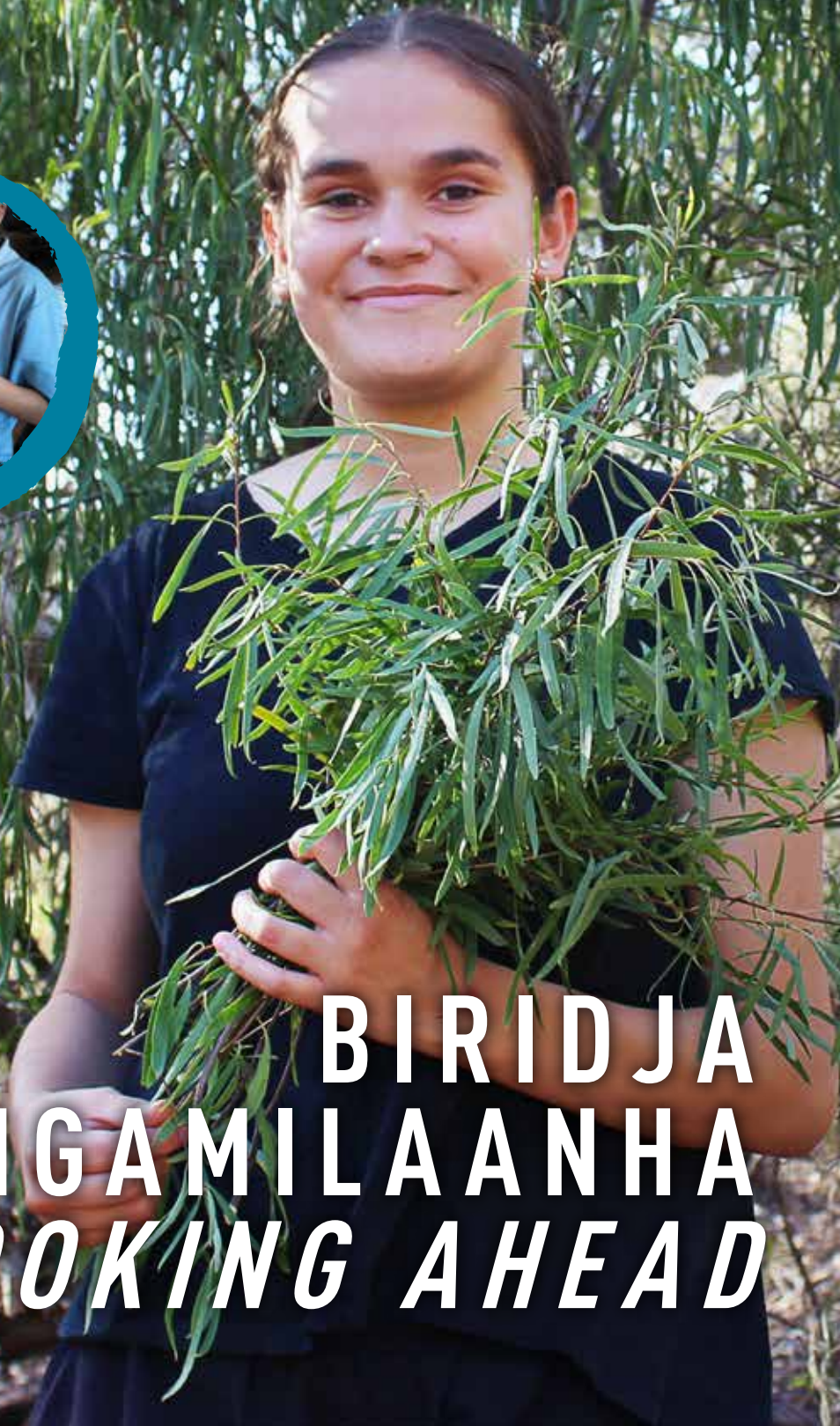


Giiirr Maaruu

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM GOMEROI CULTURE ACADEMY DECEMBER 2019



BIRIDJA NGAMILAANHA *LOOKING AHEAD*



GOMEROI
CULTURE ACADEMY

Working to support and inspire a generation of culturally strong leaders within our community.

On Country Learning

Throughout Term 4, the GCA's time out on Country has focused on the role that leadership plays within our stories.

The students spent time with Greg Griffiths in Gunnedah learning stories about the legendary Cumbo Gunnerah (Red Kangaroo) and how he led his people and stood against adversity. Cumbo Gunnerah is recognised for his strength, persistence and innovation, and his story forms an integral part of the Gomerai identity.

While in Gunnedah, we visited Bindea (Porcupine Lookout), another special place. Students commented on how Bindea's story matches the Country and were fascinated in how it connects with other stories from across the region. From Bindea we looked over the Nandewar Range and Liverpool Plains and heard stories from these places, including the story of Maryn the Dingo which provides important lessons about our role in shaping Country.

Students also visited the sacred site created by Cumbo Gunnerah, now called Wallaby Trap. This site lies at the foot of Bindea and demonstrates how the country can be managed for environmental and social sustainability. The trap was created by burning a specific section of grass, surrounded by impenetrable scrub, so that bundarr and other animals could be drawn in and hunted. Students commented on this smart and sophisticated planning, and took pride in knowing they are descended from of such great thinkers.



Outside of Gunnedah, students visited other special places within the Kelvin State Forest including a special area filled with Bumbul Trees, 'Skull Rock,' and the site of a Corroboree held over 100 years, recorded by an old photo of men painted up ready to dance.

Students were tested for their memory of native plants, and were able to identify quinine, gumbi gumbi, sandalwood and bumbul.

Those specialising in bush medicine shared insights into the processes undertaken to make the plants medicinal.



This year students have spent many hours in the bush connecting to Country and developing a better understanding what is happening around them. Many of the students have said that the experience has given them a new set of eyes to see things that they could never see before.



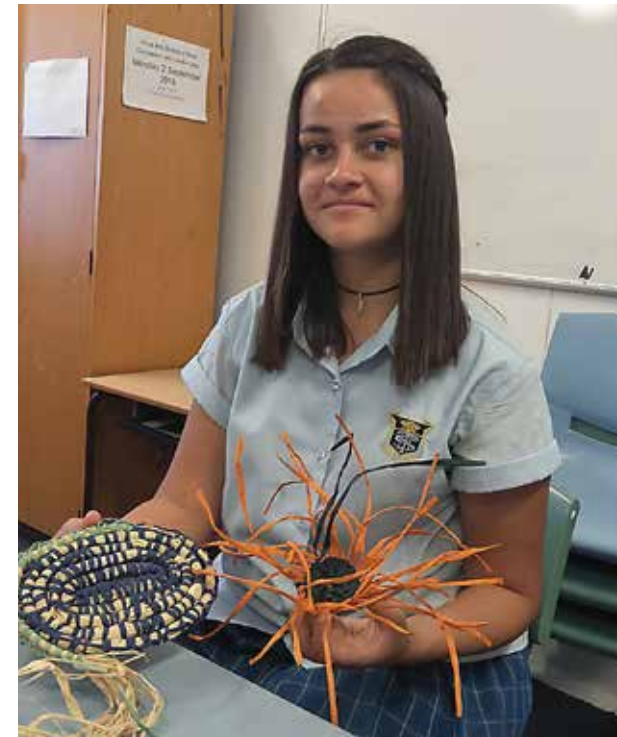
MENTORING



All of the GCA students have shown dedication toward completing their Cultural Learning Plans in preparation for the 2019 Graduation Ceremony, spending considerable time with their cultural mentors.

After performing at his school's assembly last term, Latrell has created his very own song and dance, telling the story of him fishing for Dhagaay (Yellowbelly) with his Dad. Latrell worked with his mentor and GCA Alumni to create the dance for his song.

Lyle and Joash have been practicing Yidaki with their mentor. Both are confident with circular-breathing and can play several different sounds and rhythms. Lyle crafted his first Yidaki from scratch. Through this process, Lyle learnt about tree identification, and the process before a Yidaki is sourced. He then learnt how to cut, shape and sand the instrument before applying bee's wax to the mouth piece. Once the Yidaki was finished Lyle could not stop looking at it – he was so proud in achieving something he has always wanted to do!

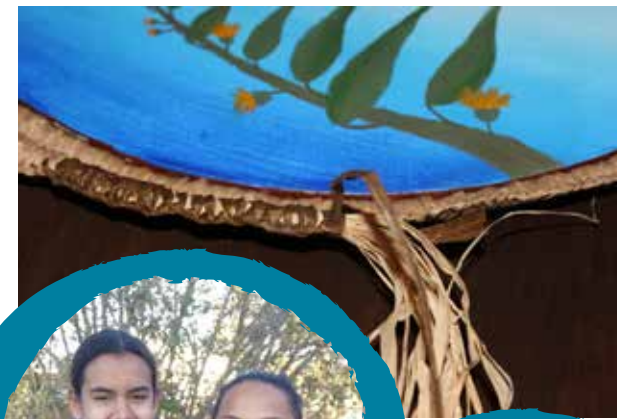


Throughout the year, April has gained a better understanding of the role that weaving plays in Gomerai culture. With the support of her mentor, April has learned different processes and techniques to make her own baskets. April has woven her baskets from paper raffia and is now comfortable creating a basket/bag from start to finish.

Tamia has spent time with mentor Bronwyn Spearim learning how art is used to tell story. Tamia is using both painting and weaving to share her story within a powerful piece. Throughout the year, Tamia has visited special places that have used art to share stories, and has drawn on those experiences to create her own work.

Alyce and Brianna have continued to build their knowledge of bush medicines and have experimented with putting bush medicines into contemporary use. They have worked on making soaps and candles to take home and use within their family. Both girls have now been out to collect their final materials.

All of the students' are looking forward to sharing their final work and performances with family and friends at the Graduation Ceremony.



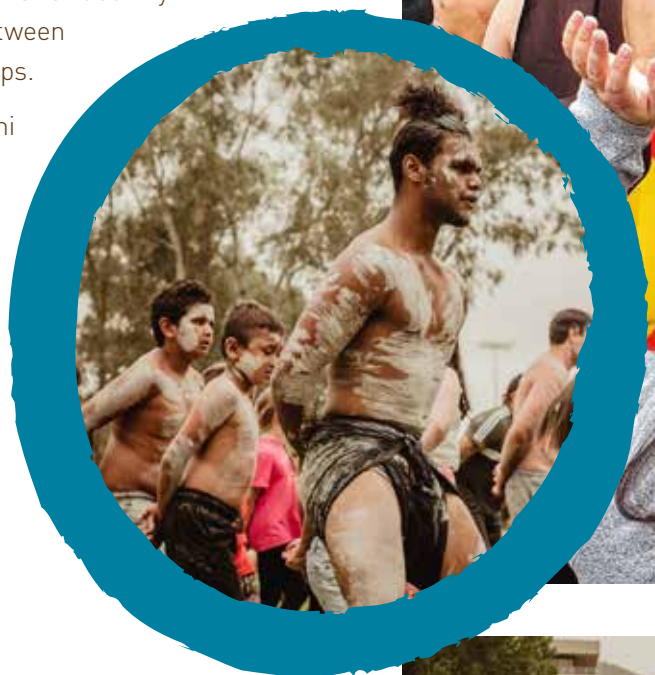
NATION DANCE

On 1 December, Tamworth answered a national call to a "Nation Dance". For the first time in history, people across Australia danced simultaneously to give love and strength back to Gunima (Mother Earth).

The day was an amazing success with more than 80 dance performances across the country, including 250 people who danced in Tamworth. Nation Dance built on conversations held throughout the year about our responsibility to look after Country and the connections between different language groups.

In Tamworth, our Alumni joined the Gomeroi Dance Company in leading a dance workshop immediately before the event, teaching over 100 dancers aged 1 – 80. It was incredible to see our young people's confidence and knowledge, and their impact at a community level. A 40 minute dance was held, with both current students and Alumni playing a significant role in leading performance and supporting others.

The event was well received within the community and across Australia, and now looks to become a regular annual event. The students' performance was highlighted positively across social media, and by local print and broadcast media.



ALUMNI



Our 2018 Alumni met at Lake Keepit to share stories and focus on the role that water and fire play in Gomeroi Country. Old stories were shared about how our first river was created and how we first got fire off Waan. These stories allowed Alumni to better understand the knowledge within our stories and its ongoing relevance.

Two Alumni joined Director, Marc Sutherland, at the 18th National Symposium on Indigenous Music and Dance, at Monash University in early December. For Maene and Makalyn, the trip represented their first time on a plane and first visit to Melbourne. Boasting an impressive program of guest speakers and knowledge holders, a highlight was the opportunity to sit with, and learn from, cultural leaders including senior Anangu woman Inawinytji Williamson and their Bupa Brian Djangirrawuy Garawirrtja, and his wife Renelle from North East Arnhem Land.



To end the Symposium, our Alumni danced with other NSW delegates, sharing dance and ceremony with Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon. Ken Wyatt MP, who personally spoke to Maene and Makalyn, congratulating them on their passion and dedication.



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-ed mar-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 support of Joblink Plus and the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA).

Gomeroid Culture Academy

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