

Giiir Maaru

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM GOMEROI CULTURE ACADEMY JULY 2020



warranggal
yilaalu
a strong future



GOMEROI
CULTURE ACADEMY

Supporting and inspiring our
next generation of leaders.

Yaama Maliyaa!

THE GOMEROI CULTURE ACADEMY'S 2020 PROGRAM STARTED OFF WITH A BANG!



At the end of 2019 we opened up applications for students moving into year 9 in 2020 and were overwhelmed by the number of students interested, with a massive 45 applications received! The high quality of the field forced an extension of our numbers from 10 to 14 for 2020, and we were proud to begin the year by officially welcoming 6 girls and 8 boys aged 14 and 15 years to the Gomeri Culture Academy. The students come from across 4 schools including Peel High, Tamworth High, McCarthy Catholic College and Farrer Memorial High School. The GCA program is

endorsed by the Tamworth Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) and will be considered for endorsement by the State AECG in 2020.

An official Welcoming Ceremony for our new students included speeches from GCA Director Marc Sutherland as well as other members of the



GCA team including Amy Hammond, Lorrelle Munro and Brad Flanders. Our guest speaker was Alumni representative Maene Trindall who shared his experience of the GCA and provided some insight into what to expect over the year. He spoke about his experience and how it helped him grow as an individual and the impact it has had on him at school and at home.

Over 120 people, including parents, grandparents, family, peers, school staff and community members, turned up to show their support and celebrate the new participants' acceptance to the GCA. Planned for 2020 were eight gatherings across four terms, weekly mentoring sessions and at least three On Country learning excursions during the school holidays. All of the students left feeling excited to commence their new journey.



Interest was shown by local media including print, television and radio broadcasters who recorded live at the event and interviewed students afterwards, and the Ceremony was featured in a front page story in the local paper. Social media shares of the news article gained attention from the wider community as well as state, national and international supporters, reaching over 6000 people from Australia, United States, United Kingdom and New Zealand.

We are looking forward to an exciting year and to building strong relationships with another amazing group of young people and their families.



GATHERINGS



COVID-19 has impacted the Gomeri Culture Academy's ability to meet as a group with one valuable gathering held prior to restrictions coming into force.

Our first gathering took students on their first trip out on Country, visiting special places around Tamworth including Daruka and Moonbi 1. At Moonbi 1 students discussed the importance of being out on Country and began to learn how to read and understand cultural landscapes. They were taught how to start a fire using Gundi (Stringy Bark) and participated in a Smoking Ceremony through which they learnt why maintaining cultural practise is so important.

Moonbi 1 gave students time to clear their minds and connect to the bush. They commented how calm and peaceful it was, and were given tools to reconnect to that feeling. It was great to see students build bonds



with other students quickly, share stories, and have a laugh with each other.

Students also began the first of many Gomeri language lessons. We discussed the role that language plays in holding cultural practice and knowledge and learnt why a 'Welcome to Country' is so important. Students learnt how to say and pronounce a phrase acknowledging the Country that they are on, and to understand the words used in the Acknowledgement.

Since March, and to align with COVID restrictions, we have moved to sharing knowledge and information online across a number of different platforms. This has allowed us to continue to sharing language lessons, as well as continuing to learn about a range of cultural practices.

Video content was created and shared by GCA cultural mentors Bareki Knox, Brad Flanders and Marc Sutherland and focused on a range of skills including playing the Yidaki, dance and language. A weaving tutorial was developed and made available by the

team at Yinarr Maramali and talked about the process of going out on Country, identifying the correct grasses and how to cut them. The videos were viewed many times and we received great feedback from parents who told us that members of their families had watched the videos and have started to learn themselves.

Students are looking forward to commencing face-to-face Gatherings again in Term 3 if COVID restrictions allow.



MENTORING

We are excited to welcome back our Cultural Mentors for 2020! The GCA's Cultural Mentors this year include Lorrelle Munro who is also our program facilitator, Bronwyn Spearim, Bareki Knox, Brad Flanders and GCA Director Marc Sutherland. Despite the impact of COVID-19, we have managed to hold 90 mentoring sessions to date. Students have achieved a 93% attendance and have already built strong relationships with their Cultural Mentors.

During their face-to-face time, and with the support of their Cultural Mentors students have created individual Cultural Learning Plans that lay out the goals they will work towards throughout the year, highlighting NAIDOC 2020 and Graduation Ceremony as key milestones. Student areas of focus for the year include weaving, painting, storytelling, Yidaki, dance and woodcarving.

Wunda, Vienna, Jesse, Aaliyah, Thora and Shakayla's Cultural Learning Plans all include a goal to better understand the role that weaving plays in Gomeroid culture. The girls spent a lot of the early part of the year out

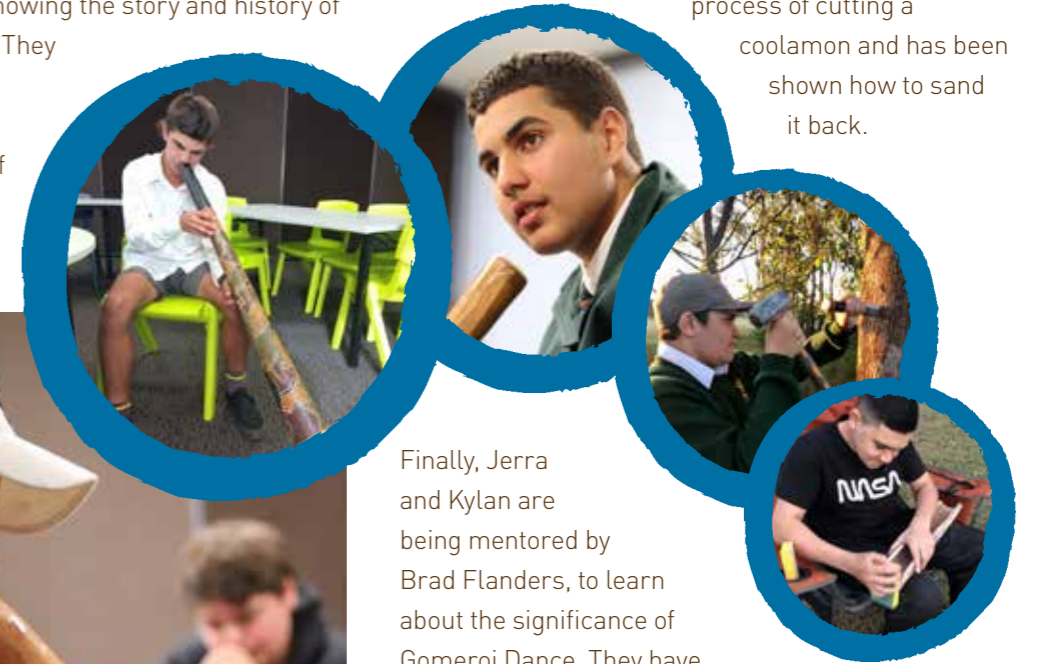
in the bush learning weaving stories. They began to learn how to identify the right plants, understand how to cut them, strip them and prepare them for weaving. The grasses are now drying so the girls can work with them next Term when they will create works that will be displayed as part of Yinarr Maramali's August exhibition at the Tamworth Regional Gallery.



Braydon, Eli, Cameron, Lars and Bailey have all been spending time with Bareki Knox who has been teaching them about the Yidaki (didgeridoo). Most of these students began mentoring not being able to make a noise and not knowing the story and history of this sacred instrument. They have now progressed in their learning and are confident in a number of breathing techniques and rhythms.



Jaylen has been spending time with Marc Sutherland learning Gomeroid language and building up his knowledge and skill of wood carving. Jaylen has already been taken out on Country to learn the process of cutting a coolamon and has been shown how to sand it back.



Finally, Jerra and Kylan are being mentored by Brad Flanders, to learn about the significance of Gomeroid Dance. They have been learning a number of stories, songs and dances, and are really focusing in on the importance of specific movements. Both boys are aiming to have created their own dance by the end of the year.



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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