

# Giiir Maaru

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM GOMEROI CULTURE ACADEMY APRIL 2018



THE  
LAUNCH  
EDITION



**GOMEROI**  
CULTURE ACADEMY

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

# Yaama!

## Welcome to the first edition of the Gomeroid Culture Academy Quarterly newsletter.

Through this newsletter, we will showcase the awesome work of our students and provide insight into the weekly activities. We will also share good

news stories, and updates on ways that students have been making a positive impact in their community and across the country.

We are excited to get the program underway and we are looking forward to seeing the amazing things that our students are going to achieve.

It is always great to know that we have the support of the community, and we can announce that we are now officially endorsed by the local Aboriginal Education Consultancy Group (AECG) and Regional and State endorsement is currently pending.

Stay tuned to keep up to date with what we are doing.

**“WE COME FROM  
A STRONG CULTURE,  
A STRONG PEOPLE AND  
A STRONG FAMILY. THIS IS  
ABOUT BUILDING ON THOSE  
VALUES AND TURNING  
THEM INTO ACTION”.**

*Marc Sutherland,  
Academy Director*





## WELCOME TO THE FIRST 10 STUDENTS OF THE GOMEROI CULTURE ACADEMY

At the launch of the Gomerai Culture Academy, we were able to recognise and celebrate the 10 students of the GCA. We were excited to share our passion and commitment to the program, as well as outline the program structure and activities for the year. It was great to see so many parents, community members, GCA supporters, and the Board and staff of our partner, Joblink Plus in attendance.

For the GCA to be possible, we rely on the ongoing commitment of the participating schools. Through the involvement of the program, students will be supported to achieve higher academic achievement and personal growth. We would like to thank the principals of Peel High School, Tamworth High School and McCarthy Catholic College, for valuing the importance of cultural identity in the development of their students.



# GATHERINGS, KINSHIP AND PEER SUPPORT

In only a few weeks students have shown great excitement in getting to know more about their peers by participating in a number of activities and experiences, and have started forming strong connections between each other.

To strengthen these connections, students have been given the opportunity to be immersed in the Gomeroi kinship structure. The kinship structure across Gomeroi Country has been perfected over thousands of years, ensuring that healthy relationships are made and maintained with each other and the world around us.

Within Gatherings students regularly hear a variety of 'Dreaming' stories from across Gomeroi country and

neighbouring language groups. After hearing the story of the Eagle, Crow and Magpie, students began to understand the importance of values, and decided to create their very own Shared Agreement.

This agreement provides an outline of behaviours and expectations placed on all GCA members, as well as set key focus areas throughout the year based around 7 core values. These 7 core values are Respect, Love, Humility, Trust, Honesty, Listening and Responsibility.

All Students have chosen the first two values of focus will be trust and love/care. Individually they have set goals and created strategies for putting these values into action, and will reflect on their experiences in the weeks to come.



## On Country Learning

Gomeroi culture has always been shared On Country, and within the Gatherings we have been able to spend valuable time connecting to local significant sites around the region, and participate in their first group Smoking Ceremony.

Visiting the painting at Moonbi 1 (pictured above) allowed students to step away from life in town and connect to the strength embedded in the landscape, walking with their shoes off and feeling Mother under their feet.

Visiting the painting gave us the opportunity to better understand the importance of the learning process.

We were able to take lessons away from the painting and have conversations around unity, support and identity relating to the students' lives and the world around them.

Students also participated in their first group 'Smoking Ceremony' and began to understand the role that this plays in Gomeroi culture. There was a strong sense of connection and belonging amongst the group, which led to a great discussion around belonging and identity.

## Mentoring

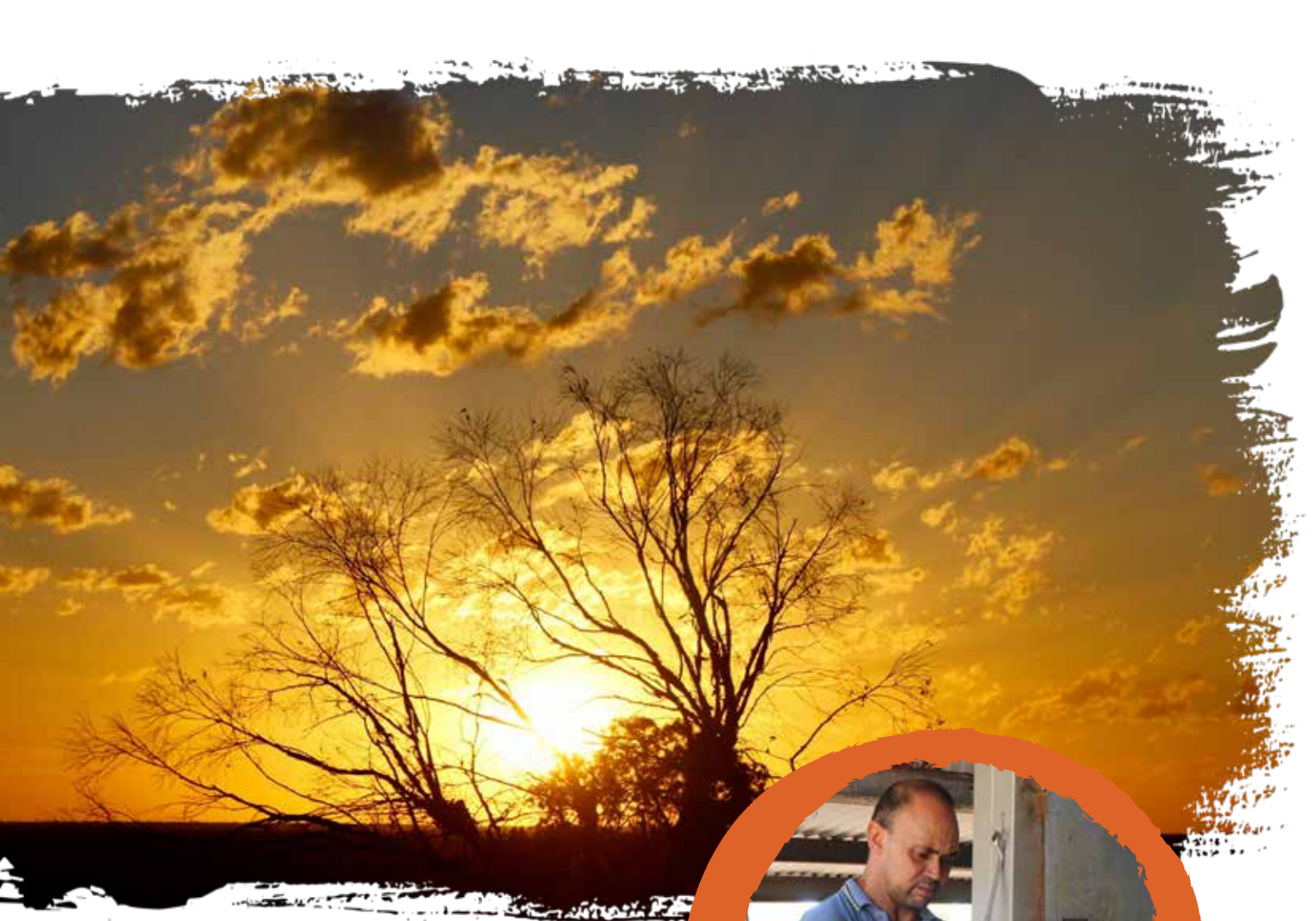
Students have been linked up with individual mentors, and have begun meeting weekly to create and work through their Cultural Learning Plans (CLP's). With their CLP's student have set 4 individual goals for the year and created strategies to ensure that they reach their targets.

Some of these goals include learning the process and importance of many cultural practices, including weaving, wood carving, song and dance and bush medicines. All students have also committed to expanding their vocabulary of Gomerioi words and become more confident in speaking it to others.

Once students become more confident in what they are learning, they have found ways to be able to share this knowledge with others. This sharing will take many forms including a variety of workshops for younger people, their peers and their community. Some students have even decided to create resources to help pass on the information.

Elements of what students have accomplished within their CLP's 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.





## WHAT'S COMING UP IN THE APRIL HOLIDAYS

To better understand where we are moving towards, we must first know where we have come from. For this reason the focus in Term 2 will be centred around family history.

To support this learning, in the April school holidays we will hit the road to get a first-hand experience of the importance of family history.

Our first stop will be a visit to the team at the Dhiyaan Centre in Moree where students will be surrounded by photos of families from Moree and guided through research techniques by the Dhiyaan staff. Students will then be taken to Terry Hie Hie Aboriginal Area to feel the strength and resilience of our families and to better understand the effects of previous government policy on Gomerói people.

Secondly, we will travel through Collarenebri to Lightning Ridge to visit Tom Barker and be shown around the "Goondie". Here students will extend on



their understanding of our history and see special items, like artefacts and photos, that pass on these stories.

Afterwards students will look into the life of a professional woodcarver and all round great man in Tom Barker (pictured above). Tom has agreed to give us a tour of his workshop and share his story with us.

During Term 2 students will be supported to undertake their own family history research. And like the Dhiyaan Centre and The Goondie, we will find our own way to share our personal stories to the world.

# STUDENT PROFILES



MOST IMPORTANT  
ADVICE MAKALYN HAS  
EVER RECEIVED:

**"ALWAYS  
RESPECT YOUR  
ELDERS"**

## MAKALYN BROWN

Makalyn Brown was born in Goondiwindi, though he now calls Tamworth home, and is currently a year 11 student at Peel High School. When he is not at school, MaKalyn can be found surrounded by his family and friends playing football, and hanging out at the Youthie.

Coming from a large family, he has always had a strong connection to his culture and has been learning Gomeroid dancing for several years. He has already taken on a leadership role within his school and peers, teaching others about the importance of dance. In 2017, with the help of a few other GCA members, he led a combined school's performance at the CAPERS Spectacular in Tamworth.

MaKalyn is hoping to build upon his knowledge of Gomeroid culture, and has set his goal to understand the process and techniques needed to make clapsticks and boomerangs out of natural woods.

Makalyn has also committed to learning 20 new songs and dances and to build his vocabulary to more than 200 Gomeroid words.



**"CULTURE TO  
ME IS BELONGING,  
IT SHOWS ME MY  
CONNECTION TO THE  
LAND, MY HISTORY  
AND MY FAMILY".**

## J-LEE NASH

J-Lee was born in Tamworth and is currently in year 9 at McCarthy Catholic College, where she continues to strive academically. J-Lee is currently employed at the Homestead Coffee Lounge and has worked there for almost 12 months.

J-Lee is motivated to learn more about her culture, and has been selected to attend cultural experiences such as Waa Gaay Residential School, the Catholic School Cultural Camp, the 'Coolamon Program' and Yinarr Maramali Weaving Workshops. Her passion for learning culture has meant that J-Lee is already finding ways to share her new knowledge and experiences with her friends and family.

Throughout her time in the GCA, J-Lee has got her sights set on better understanding the world around her, and to learn the names and uses of native plants, including making natural remedies and medicines. J-Lee is also focused on better developing her skill and passion for weaving. She hopes to become more familiar with the process and techniques used in weaving with both natural grass and recycled contemporary materials.

# 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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