

Giirr Maaru

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM GOMEROI CULTURE ACADEMY DECEMBER 2018



YILAALU
NGAYAGU
MY FUTURE



GOMEROI
CULTURE ACADEMY

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

On Country Learning

BOOBERA LAGOON, TOOMELAH,
GOONDIWINDI, WEENGALLON, ST GEORGE,
MUNGINDI AND NARRABRI



For our final On Country Learning Experience, students travelled into the Northern parts of Gomeri Country to better understand the different ways that special places can help shape our behaviour.



Buddy Hippi shared with us the story and power of Boobera Lagoon, a special place to not only the surrounding communities but all Gomeri people. As the students walked along the Lagoon they said they could feel the presence of 'Garriya', the Rainbow Serpent and spoke about the importance of respecting the world around us, as well as personal and cultural values.

After leaving Boobera Lagoon, Buddy talked about the importance of staying true to yourself and being a part of the legacy created by our 'Old People'. He then continued to show us around the Toomelah community to share with us a large canoe tree, that was cut by his Grandfather Charles Dennison almost 80 years ago.





While in Goondiwindi students were given a guided tour of the Botanic Gardens with Aunty Bernadette Duncan. Aunty Bernadette pointed out some of the local bush medicines and talked about the role that community must play to look after these plants.

On the way to St George, students stopped at the Weengallon Rock Pools, a significant site with a great story. In St George, students were greeted by Uncle Chris Lamb and Gordon Lister at the Mani Tribes Gallery, where students were shown local artworks and heard stories connected to the St George

community. After being so graciously welcomed into the St George community, students put on a dance performance at the community centre to show their appreciation.

In the morning students walked along the Balonne River with Aunty Trish McPherson. Aunty Trish pointed out some of the special trees along the river and encouraged students to make a connection with the water. Aunty Trish also took the students to visit some of the special places around St George including 'Hollywood' and the 'Old Reserve'.

After a short stop in Mungindi, students were greeted by Steven Booby at Narrabri and were taken to Sawn Rocks and Deriah Aboriginal Area. Here students were given an insight into some of the stories surrounding Narrabri and discussed how these sites and stories are still teaching us many things about our roles and responsibilities.



GATHERINGS

Throughout the year students have built up their understanding of belonging, family history and identity, language and cultural practices. With this foundation set, students could have meaningful conversations around self-awareness and begin to identify some of the values, strengths and motivations that are unique to them during our term 4 Gatherings.

After visiting many significant sites and a variety of communities during the year, students have explored the role that values play in shaping our behaviour, and have worked on identifying their own personal values. Students heard personal experiences from many community members including Shaun Allen and Amy Hammond, who lead discussions around how their personal values and strengths had shaped and made positive impacts on their lives.

Students participated in a range of activities, not only identifying their own values and strengths, but highlighting possible areas of growth including both skill and knowledge based. Students also discussed different types of motivation and made a connection between working within an area of strength, having a clear purpose and being motivated.

With such a higher sense of self-awareness, students now have a stronger foundation to base their decision making from and create even more opportunities for growth. Students have identified pathways of interest and have already begun to move into employment, obtain driver's license and make more informed decisions around school subject selections.



MENTORING



With their Graduation Ceremony moving closer, students have continued to spend time with their mentors and have reached their goals as set out in their Cultural Learning Plans.

During this term, students have continued working closely with the women from Yinarr Maramali, gaining a better understanding in a variety of cultural practices. Students have begun learning how to source and create different coloured dye from barks, learn new weaving techniques and gain confidence in using art to share stories on a variety of mediums.

To continue their growth in woodcarving, some of the students travelled out to Lightning Ridge to spend time with renowned wood carver Tom Barker. Tom guided students through the process of woodcarving

and talked to them about the connection between traditional and contemporary tools.

Throughout the year, some of the students who have been learning more about the importance of song and dance, were invited to take part in Dance Rites at the Sydney Opera House. The experience reinforced the power of dance as they performed with groups from all over the world and in front of thousands of people.



GOMEROI CULTURE ACADEMY EXHIBITION

With the support of their mentors', students have all reached their goals and now have an in-depth understanding of the different techniques and processes within the areas of weaving, woodcarving, possum skins making, storytelling, song, dance and language.

With such a high standard of quality and cultural connection, the students work has been included into the annual program of the Tamworth Regional

Gallery. The Gomeroid Culture Academy Exhibition will be on display at the Tamworth Regional Gallery from the first of December until the first of February, coinciding with the exhibition of the Archibald Prize.

All artworks produced by the students reflect their learning journey throughout the year and share stories of their experience. Students hard work and commitment will be celebrated with their family and friends at their Graduation Ceremony, which will be held within their exhibition.



Gomeroid Culture Academy

The Gomeroid Culture Academy is a culturally focused mentoring program enabling participants to connect with their culture, strengthen and develop their own personal identity and build a strong foundation for future pathways.

At the beginning of the year students identified individual areas of learning and have spent time with cultural mentors on a weekly basis to reach their goals. During this learning process participants have created many amazing things, some of which are included in this exhibition.

The Schools participating in the Gomeroid Culture Academy in 2018 include Peel High School, Tamworth High School and McCarthy Catholic College. We thank all the schools and the students for their contribution. The program is delivered in partnership with the Gomeroid Cultural Society, Yinarr Marri and Joblink Plus.



STUDENT PROFILES

"I LOVE DANCING BECAUSE IT TELLS OUR STORIES."



MAENE TRINDALL

Maene is currently in year 10 at Peel High School and is passionate about learning more about his culture. As part of the Gomerai Culture Academy, Maene has chosen to continue learning about songs and dance and has been spending time with mentors to strengthen his understanding.

Within his Cultural Learning Plan, Maene has set goals including learning 10 songs and dances, to better understand the process of woodcarving, create his own dancing boomerangs and grow his vocabulary of Gomerai words.



EBONY NADEN

Ebony is in year 10 at Tamworth High School and is connected to Wiradjuri Country. Ebony is passionate about art and has been excited to learn how stories are shared through cultural art practices.

Ebony is focused on gaining a better understanding of how art has been used to share stories and has visited many sacred sites throughout the year. Ebony has gained more experience using traditional painting materials including ochre and is creating her own artwork based on the stories that she has learned this year.

"BEFORE REACHING OUT, WE MUST FIRST REACH WITHIN."

"TRUST IS THE FOUNDATION OF EVERYTHING."



JORJA IRWIN

Jorja is in year 10 at Tamworth High School and is connected to Biripi Country. Although joining the Academy mid-year, Jorja has displayed a high level of dedication and passion to learn more about her culture.

When setting goals for the year Jorja outlined that she would like to build her knowledge and vocabulary of Gomerai language and better understand the techniques and processes of weaving, and is currently creating a woven mat representing her own personal journey.

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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