

Giirr Maaru

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM GOMEROI CULTURE ACADEMY OCTOBER 2019



**BURRUL
GIWAANHA GURAARR
*GROWING TALL***



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

On Country Learning

GRINDING GROVES, OCHRE QUARRY AND BAIAME CAVE



During the July school holidays, our Gomerai Culture Academy (GCA) students travelled south to visit a number of special places that lie in the southern part of Gomerai Country. Along the way, we were able to see first-hand the importance of storylines, and how they connect Country.

Our first stop was the grinding grooves now located at the Liverpool Plains Visitor Information Centre at Willow Tree. Here students walked the path and read about the importance of these grinding grooves and their place in Country. The grinding grooves were originally located on the Liverpool Plains but have been relocated due to mining. For many of the

students their understanding of the impact of external factors, such as mining, on local sites was very limited, and visiting these grinding grooves provided great insight into some of the work that has been done to protect our sites.

After this, we visited an ochre quarry and talked about the importance of knowing Country and the uses of different ochre. The students had a chance to see and feel the ochre in its natural state and collected some to use later in the year. Some of the students will be using ochre to create artworks for the end of year exhibition, and some will use it as body paint for upcoming performances. This site encouraged us to

talk about the government policies and legislation that governs access to Country and our ability to collect traditional resources. This allowed a discussion on the current and past efforts that have been made to have our cultural rights recognised.

From here, we travelled south onto Wanaruah Country to visit a special cave that our creator Baiame painted. At the cave, we shared stories of our creator as he travelled Country sharing lore to many communities and carving the landscape along the way. Throughout the year, students will continue to hear stories of Baiame's journey, building up their understanding of how different language groups are connected and how we can learn so much from connecting with Country.



GATHERINGS



During our Term 3 Gatherings, the GCA students spent time out on Country learning the importance of being comfortable with themselves, and being calm and still when things around them are moving fast. With a local focus, the students visited cultural sites located around Tamworth including Moonbi 1 and Wave Rock. Even students visiting these places for the first time, commented how they felt an instant connection to place.

At these sites students heard stories of how and why Country was made by continuing to follow the story of Garriya, the Rainbow Serpent and tracking an important Songline. A

smoking ceremony prompted a



discussion on the importance of ceremony, and the role that smoking ceremonies play within our cultural protocols.

Students also visited some rock paintings and learned the lessons and stories that they describe. We were able to have authentic conversations around self-determination, support and unity, and learned the importance of having responsibility and consequences. The story of Yarraandu (the Southern Cross and Pointers) helped to guide a conversation about dealing with grief and loss.

Students also spent time identifying local trees and their uses. For example, we studied the Gundhi (stringybark) and how the bark can be used to start fires, make rope and form roofing for traditional houses.



MENTORING

Latrell has continued his mentoring with Marc Sutherland to build up his Gomeroi vocabulary and understanding of the role of song in sharing stories. Significantly, Latrell performed an Acknowledgment of Country and two Gomeroi language songs in front of a 900-strong assembly. This was his first time publicly speaking or singing in language, and the feedback from his family and school was overwhelmingly positive. Latrell is aiming to share these songs at the Graduation Ceremony, as well as a song he is writing himself.

Brianna and Alyce have committed to better understand the natural world by identifying and understanding different plants. Under mentor Lorrelle Munro, the girls have learned to collect giyawaan (kurrajong tree fibres) and use rope-making techniques. They have also learned to collect grass tree resin and have made oils from different plants.



Both Brianna and Alyce have created their own guliman (coolamon) which will be on display at the end of the year holding their collections of bush medicines and resources.



Joash has continued to learn yidaki, and performed at his schools NAIDOC Assembly, as well as joining in with the dance performance that followed. Joash is building his understanding of the yidaki and will work with the other boys to carve their own instrument.



NAIDOC: VOICE, TREATY, TRUTH

A large element of the GCA is about giving back to community and this year both our current students and Alumni played an active role in recognising and celebrating the 2019 NAIDOC theme- Voice, Treaty, Truth - across Tamworth and the region. Both groups of students were recognised for their actions, and individually they received many awards celebrating their achievements academically, athletically, and across the community.

The students' community contributions were put front and centre through their involvement preparing for and during the Tamworth NAIDOC Family Fun Day and Corroboree. In the week leading up to the event, Alumni facilitated a series of dance workshops alongside the Gomerai Dance Company to teach other young people the dances to be performed at the Corroboree. Across the week, over 120 young people attended and all learned dance.

On the NAIDOC Family Fun Day, our students and Alumni supported over 80 young people to paint up and perform in front of their family and friends - one of the highlights of the entire week. GCA students and Alumni also provided support across the event, setting up and packing down equipment, cutting and serving out the NAIDOC Cake, and making sure that Elders were being looked after.

Maene Trindall took on the role of MC and excelled in it, entertaining the crowd with his bright sense of humour and keeping all formalities rolling seamlessly. Maene's performance in the role caught the attention of many people, who are now looking for him to MC other events.



ALUMNI

Our GCA Alumni spent some time back out on Country re-connecting with each other this term by taking a deeper look at local significant sites. The Alumni joined together to visit a sacred rock painting that teaches us about a large and important story. At this site, they shared the experiences they have had over the past few weeks and reviewed their personal values and the importance of these to assist in their decision-making.

Sitting around the fire students discussed how they are using the knowledge that they have learned through the GCA program and are applying it in personal projects and pursuits. A story from the night sky was shared to talk about the importance of discipline, and explore the knowledge and stories that Gomerai people shared based on their understanding of the stars.

To continue their learning, Alumni were then showed how to identify the right tree for them to cut their own guliman (coolamon), and were helped to understand the seasonal conditions under which this must be done.

It was great to see the Alumni reconnect, and share stories and experiences with each other.

They commented how relaxing it was to be back out in the bush and that it felt like their batteries were recharged.



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

PO Box 357, West Tamworth NSW 2340.

M: 0432 652 832

E: gomeroidancecompany@gmail.com

f /GomeroidCultureAcademy #GCA

