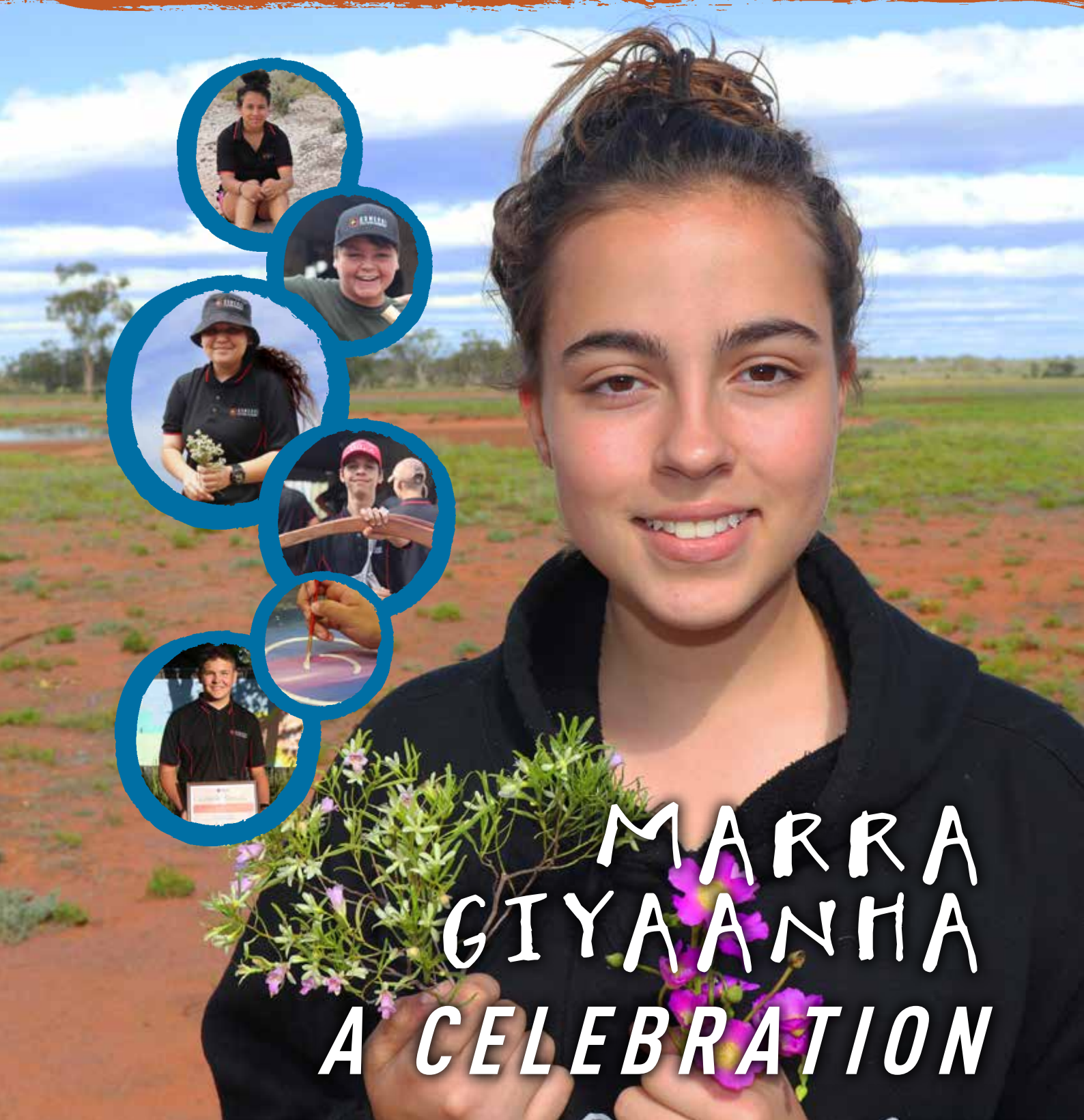


Giiir Maaru

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM GOMEROI CULTURE ACADEMY DECEMBER 2020



MARRA GIYAANHA *A CELEBRATION*



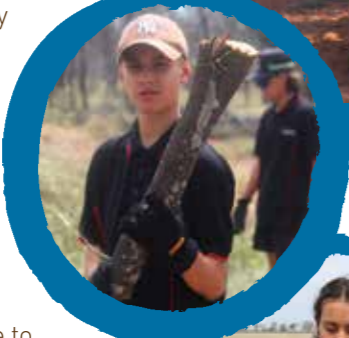
GOMEROI
CULTURE ACADEMY

*Supporting and inspiring our
next generation of leaders.*

On Country Learning

The Gomerai Culture Academy's final On Country learning experience for 2020 took place during the October school holidays and encompassed visits to Angledool, Lightning Ridge and Narran Lakes, hosted by a number local Aboriginal knowledge holders over 4 days.

At Angledool, an historically important Aboriginal reserve, students saw the remains of houses and scattered materials, and walked through the old cemetery. They were able to link this experience with their time at Burra Bee Dee to better understand the Aboriginal Protection Act and the conditions that our families lived through.



Rhonda Ashby joined students to teach them about bush medicines and native seeds. They were shown how to collect quinine, yurraa, leopard wood, sandalwood, native grasses and flower seeds, and told how to correctly prepare them for consumption.

The boys also spent time with Tom Barker, accompanying him to cut mulga bends for boomerangs and box trees for didgeridoos. At Tom's workshop, they watched as he transformed the raw materials. This experience reinforced learnings from throughout the year but with a more hands-on approach.

A visit to Narran Lake Nature Reserve was also featured, and we were lucky to



get access to the Reserve which was closed most of 2020 due to COVID-19. Here students heard the creation story of the Narran and broke down the lessons of the story, as portrayed in the landscape. Students spent time consolidating what they had learned over the year, linking the many stories of Garriya across Gomerai country, to better understand the role of songlines.

There was a considerable amount of water in the lake which is rare and a beautiful sight. Odee Welsh taught students about the ecology of the lake and also showed us the abundance of artefact scattered in the area.



Students visited the shell midden site where tens of thousands of years of mussel shells are embedded in the ground. Western science uses these middens to prove the lengthy occupation of the lakes.

Looking around, you could imagine people coming together at such a special place. The students commented how connected they felt to the lake, and drew strength from doing the same things that their ancestors had done for thousands of years.

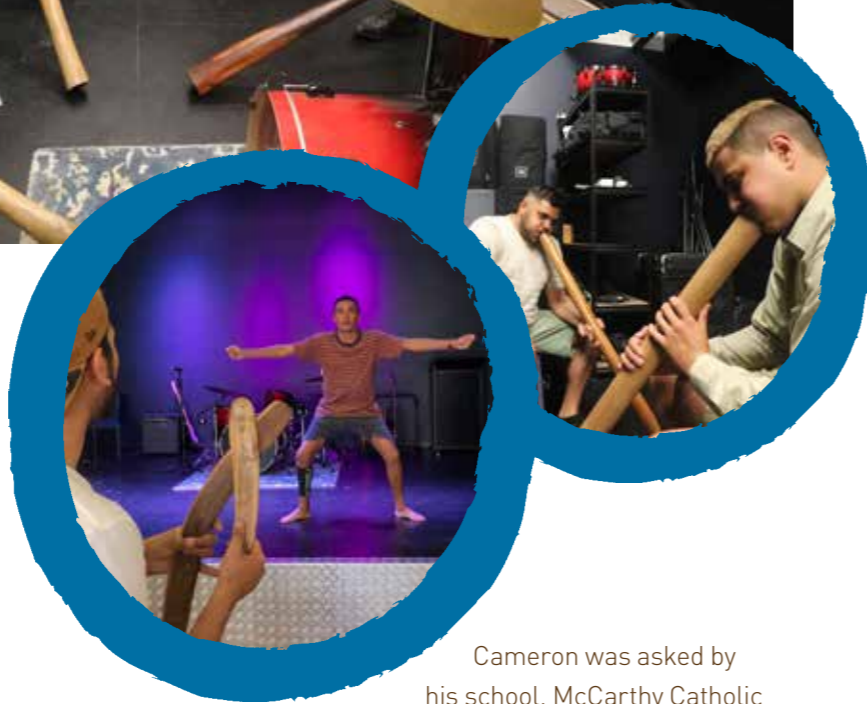


MENTORING



The passion and commitment shown by all students to their mentoring and personal goals throughout 2020 has been incredible considering the circumstances. A high level of attendance (89%) has been maintained with students collectively participating in 240 mentoring sessions. Students are looking forward to sharing their journeys with family and friends at their Graduation Ceremony.

Students focusing on didgeridoo have worked with mentor Bareki Knox to practice their skills and techniques, and spent time with internationally-renowned yidaki player Mark Atkins. The boys have worked to compose a musical sequence that incorporates what they have learnt, and make a recording which will be played at their Graduation Ceremony and made into a CD.



Cameron was asked by his school, McCarthy Catholic College, to be a part of their NAIDOC celebrations. A short video of him playing yidaki was created, with GCA Alumni J-Lee Nash speaking in Gomeri language. The video was played for all students and staff and it was great to see Cameron's confidence shine through the screen.

Jaylen has focused on woodcarving to complete his final pair of mulga barrangal (boomerangs). His journey has seen him spend time with knowledgeable woodcarvers, learning to use mulga, gidgee and myall trees.

Jerra and Kylan have continued to spend time with cultural mentor Brad Flanders, in their study of traditional dance. In December, Jerra danced with Brad at the Bunya Mountains National Park on Wakka Wakka Country. The gathering at the Bunya Mountains is of cultural significance to many different Nations, including Gomeri people, who have attended these gatherings for thousands of years.

Wunda's year connecting with Gomeri country, led to her also connecting more strongly with her family's Country in North Queensland. Wunda has shared this connection through creating a large vibrant acrylic painting.

Thora and Aaliyah concentrated on the practice of weaving and spent time on Country making their final baskets for the year. And Vienna combined her passion for weaving and painting to share a personal story from her own journey.



Shakayla has also been working with her mentor to find artistic ways to share our stories. One of Shakayla's artworks "Dhuli on Dhawun" (Sand Goanna on Country) won her school's art competition which will see her design incorporated into the Peel High School Aboriginal staff uniform for 2021.

We are very proud of all of the 2020 GCA students and their achievements over a difficult year.





GRADUATION CEREMONY

On Friday 11 December we formally celebrated and recognised the efforts of our students at their Graduation Ceremony. The Graduation was held at the Tamworth Regional Youth Centre and showcased the work of 13 graduates who were joined by as many family and friends as possible within the Centre's COVID-safe capacity.

The ceremony was a chance for students to showcase their development throughout the year.

The MC was 2018 Alumni Maene Trindall. Aaliyah and Thora acknowledged Country in both Gamilaraay and English – an extension of their learning of Gamilaraay language and protocols. The music that 2020 GCA yidaki students recorded in previous weeks was played as a background before and after the Ceremony, setting the tone for an emotional and exciting event.



Jeremiah and Kylan, who have been focusing on Gomeroi dance, danced strongly and spoke passionately, sharing what they had learned with the support mentor Brad Flanders.

Shakayla and Vienna provided an insight from the GCA students, reflecting on their On Country learning and thanking the people who shared their knowledge and Country with them.

Cameron, Braydon, Elijah, Bailey and Lars combined in a yidaki performance that showcased the skills and techniques they learned through the year, supported by mentor Bareki Knox.

Shakayla, Thora, Aaliyah, Wunda and Vienna displayed the weavings and artworks that they had created during the year. Shakayla presented two large acrylic paintings, Aaliyah and Thora shared their woven dance skirts and other woven items, and Vienna and Wunda incorporated weaving, painting and storytelling.

Jaylen shared his completed carved dancing boomerangs, and a hunting boomerang made out of mulga. Jaylen's dancing boomerangs will be used during the next corroboree in Tamworth.

Each student was presented with a graduation certificate and personalised dilly bags woven by the women at Yinarr Maramali. Each woven bag represented a different bird from Gomeroi country and holds special meaning. Students were told that a woven dilly bag is never empty as they all hold special stories, and these bags hold the memories from the GCA experience.

Each graduate will now become a member of the GCA Alumni. They will continue to be supported by the GCA to continue to grow culturally, academically and professionally, and will have opportunities to provide the GCA with direction and insight, to ensure the GCA is working to best support and inspire young people into the future.



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 the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA).

Gomeroid Culture Academy

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Yinarr Maramali
WEAVING OUR STORY



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