



# Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School

Many Cultures, One Community  
www.yiramalay.net

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## Always Was, Always Will Be

The 2020 NAIDOC theme - Always Was, Always Will Be - recognises that First Nations people have occupied and cared for this continent for over 65,000 years.

Traditionally held in what for us is usually the July school holidays, one of the unexpected positive outcomes in this COVID-19 year was the shift of this week of celebration to the new date: 8 - 15 November. This allowed us to engage students in recognising NAIDOC through cultural activities and actions for the first time.

Our students continued to follow in the footsteps of their ancestors by caring for country. One such action took place over the space of an hour...in the dark of the evening, students worked alongside Bunuba Rangers to collect over 50 cane toads from around the back of the school. Quite an achievement! Other highlights of the week included our NAIDOC film festival where Aboriginal filmmakers and films were showcased and celebrated; a fantastic evening with Kankawa Nagarra (Olive Knight), who played the blues for us and shared more wonderful stories; a bush tucker night with fresh kangaroo tail stew, barramundi, bush turkey and goanna; bush bracelet making and dying of fabrics using bush dyes, led by Bunuba elders; and a morning working side-by-side with staff and students from the Fitzroy Valley District High School to provide fun workshops for primary-school aged students and where we listened to June Oscar reminded us all that for thousands of years, Aboriginal people have been the scientists, the navigators, the farmers, the artists and the diplomats.



Images from Term 4 and NAIDOC week.

At the Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School we continuously celebrate the rich history, diverse cultures, and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the oldest continuing cultures on the planet. We acknowledge that this nation's story began at the dawn of time and not with the documented European contact. The very first footprints on this continent were those belonging to First Nations peoples and we continue to ensure we tread lightly on this precious Bunuba country, as we support students to take pride in their heritage, history, and identity.

We are so proud of the students and the way they live this change. Working so hard to develop themselves, academically, personally and out in the workforce. Preparing themselves to lead, to mentor and to role model.

## Felicity Pearson, Director (Acting)

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's first people and pay our respects to their elders both past and present as owners of this land where we stand.

## Theatre Kimberley

This year, our highly valued partnership with the outstanding Theatre Kimberley resulted in our third collaboration together, and it certainly did not disappoint. On the back of 2019 Gilandarri, a circus show performed onsite in the Kimberley, this year saw eight students and three residential mentors travel to Broome to perform three shows of *Te Kore – a world beyond - Worn Art Revamped*.

We were so fortunate to have the opportunity to work with visual artist Jacky Cheng and her husband Greg Nichols, in the lead up to the show. Jacky and Greg travelled to the school over a period of four weeks to engage students and staff in Binarri.awarra Jurali ngingi (Let's all learn from the past) creative workshops centred around creating and making costumes from recycled materials. Inspired by Jacky and Greg's enthusiasm, encouragement and absolute belief in the potential of our mob, everyone was provided with the opportunity to explore new artforms and creation stories from their country, and use this knowledge to craft wearable artworks to be modelled in the exciting visual theatre performance that was to become *Te Kore*. 'The Performers' as they came to be known – Hiki-Lee Kinley, Jirrwirlyni Jeffries, Nineisha Norman, Haylie McCahon, Tanika McHenry, Tonheya McCormack, Elizah Dingo, Kelwin Unghango, Maxie Coppin, Kahlia Rogers and Ayla Pearson, journeyed to Broome for a week where they juggled morning school work, afternoon rehearsals and radio interviews on ABC Kimberley, and worked with choreographers and models to bring both their own creations, and those of other artists, to life on the stage over two days and three shows from 6 - 7 November.

The show drew inspiration from the striking Dinosaur Coast of Broome and featured a stunning collection of wearable artworks created by Kimberley designers and award-winning entrants from Perth and overseas. We held our own and happily, Hiki-Lee, Kahlia and Ayla were recognised for their stunning costume 'Yira-Goddess' with the award and prize in Category 8 – Stories from Country – a wonderful highlight of the week. We are grateful for the partnership with Theatre Kimberley, which is critical in providing arts access for remote youth, many of whom have limited opportunities to access arts projects locally. During both the creative and performance stages, we observed noticeable growth in student communication, confidence, stamina, positive self-talk, ability to take risks, teamwork, and maturity. We were so proud of 'The Performers' but also so very pleased by the fabulous way in which their peers and staff supported their creative endeavours both in the lead-up and during the show. The cheering of the Yiramalay mob at the Friday night performance told me much about the strength and health of our community.

### Felicity Pearson, Director (Acting)



Images from the Binarri.awarra Jurali ngingi (Let's all learn from the past) creative workshops and Te- Kore Worn Art Revamped production

### Thank you

The Binarri.awarra Jurali ngingi (Let's all learn from the past) workshop facilitated by Theatre Kimberley for the *Te- Kore Worn Art Revamped* production, was unlike any other workshops I've facilitated. It was far more challenging and exciting in so many ways. Equipped with only a bag full of industrial shade cloth remnants, papers, donated old books and CDs from Broome Public Library, used fabrics, a few key tools such as scissors, glue, needles and threads; the students and I co-designed and produced an array of costumes inspired by the Yiramalay stories, landscape, flora and fauna. Wow! Such amazing effort by all involved. I am most proud of the resilience and active participation by all students during the rehearsals leading up to the three physically and mentally demanding performances. The backstage managers, choreographers and Theatre Kimberley production crew were amazed by how quickly everyone adapted to their role on stage with a professional attitude and respect for the industry.

On behalf of Theatre Kimberley, we want to thank you for your energy, fun and loving personalities, intelligence, wit and most importantly, for trusting our vision and coming along for a ride in making *Te-Kore Worn Art Revamped* a success. The show will not have been the same without you all. We look forward to all future partnerships and can't wait to come back to Yiramalay again.

### Jacky Cheng, Visual Artist

## Wearable wow-able garments

The creative process at play in the artist-in-residence project Binarri.awarra Jurali ngingi appeared to start with a humble piece of paper being folded, yet there is so much more embedded in it. The elements of critical thinking and problem solving are not immediately obvious in the finished extravagances of costumes produced, nonetheless those components are glued and stapled, pleated and gathered into place, as solutions were tried out and elements were made and remade.

The challenges of trying something new came with the freedom to experiment with unfamiliar materials and to see where it took us. Some people were inspired to play with colour and form, while others were swept away with the grand scale, adding height and whimsy to their piece. Some people worked methodically with a plan already in mind returning each session, and others snatched the momentum of inspiration working collaboratively and taking chances. Everyone benefited from the enthusiasm and guidance that our artists-in-residence lavished on us, elevating those humble elements and finessing them into wearable wow-able garments.

*Mary Zbierski-West, teacher*



Images from the Binarri.awarra Jurali ngingi (Let's all learn from the past) creative workshops

## Student reflections

In making that Desert Flower costume, the punctured brown packaging papers were all in different pieces and we had to spread the papers, staple them, and then stick them together with tape to make them into a bubble skirt. The pattern showed like a snakeskin and I also glued the mirror side of broken CD bits onto the top and bottom. I made little flowers out of coloured papers and put them all around. Greg helped me with making the skirt, and Jacky showed me how to do the paper flowers and stick them into the skirt to look more colourful. Then I made a crown with the same process with the CDs and the paper flowers. To me it looked puffy and playful with Niniesha modelling it for the show.

*Kyhona Fraser, Year 12*

My piece, the Bush Chook, was made with a large piece of thick brown paper that was carefully folded to create a 3D skirt. At the ends of the skirt we glued authentic feathers from the wings of a bush turkey which was caught near the school and plucked locally at the Yiramalay Spring. The feathers were also used for the crown, neck-piece, and arm bands. I modelled the piece myself at the Worn Art performances and felt a rush of adrenalin and nerves as I went on stage on the catwalk. We did have some low times, but we bounced back from them and I really liked the experience. Can't wait for next show! Hopefully in two years I can participate once again.

*Hiki-Lee Kinley, Year 11*

I arrived back to Yiramalay two weeks later this term and so I was watching the artists Jacky and Greg design and make the Worn Art costumes. I thought they were pretty cool! Everyone here encouraged me to model one of the student's work for the *Te Kore* show. At first, I was nervous and scared, and then the other girls and the staff encouraged me by giving me inspiring speeches. After doing the show I realised I felt good about myself because I experienced something new. I had done something like this before in Melbourne, but this time there were more shows and more build up. It was good meeting the other models and talking with them. I really enjoyed every one of the costumes and enjoyed modelling other people's clothes. I would like to do more of that in my future.

*Niniesha Norman, Year 11*

I saw Jacky and Greg with the students folding some papers to make costumes with flowers on it. I was inspired to do a large painting on canvas of Wandjina figures from my tribes, Ngarinyin, Worrorra and Wunambal. Later on Jacky and Greg offered me some modelling in the show to join with the bride. I was covered in white paint, and was wearing a nuga loin cloth. When I first started modelling I was a bit nervous with the first show and Jacky and Greg told me 'all those people will love your costume, and as soon as you step on the stage they will holla at you'. I kept on practising my movement on the stage and I got better and better, and by the third show I was feeling more comfortable dancing with the others. When the last show came my nerves just faded away and I was happy and proud of myself.

*Kelwin Unghango, Year 11*



Kyhona Fraser working on her creation



Hiki-Lee wearing her creation



Kelwin Unghango painting Wandjina figures

## Time to rest and relax

At the Studio School, this year's NAIDOC theme - Always Was, Always Will Be, underpins many programs and activities our students undertake, reinforcing the connection to country and culture. This term many of the activities were experienced on country, they included fishing trips to Lily Hole on the Fitzroy River, picnic lunches at Danggu Geikie Gorge, and kayaking exploring spectacular Broome coastline inhabited by sea turtles. These activities are initiated by students, who jump at every opportunity to be on country where some of their best learning takes place - including how to dig a troopy out of a bog! On country trips are undertaken after consultation with local Elders who often accompany students and provide guidance that students respectfully observe, acknowledging and learning from the deep wisdom that Elders have of country.

This term also saw over 20 students volunteering their time to support the coordination of the Fitzroy Valley Family Fright Night run by Garnduwa at Fitzroy's Youth Centre. Inclusion in this positive community event introduces students to new people and situations and showcases them as great role models, building their self-esteem and confidence. The introduction of *Minute to Win It* games on Wednesday nights has been a successful activity with students, involving a series of 60-second challenges that use objects that are commonly available, its emphasis is on fun, although some students get to explore their competitive side.

These afternoon, evening and weekend activities strengthen the health and wellbeing of students, they provide a welcome distraction from the school routine and allow students time to rest and relax. Relationships with peers and staff are enhanced and students develop a better understanding of themselves.

### Ryan Ali-Akil, Program Activities Co-ordinator



Images from the Boab Basketball Carnival and afternoon, evening and weekend activities

### Boab Basketball Carnival

Earlier this term, nine Yiramalay students travelled to compete in the Boab Basketball Carnival, a community event hosted in Derby. The competition involved 16 teams and engaged over 100 Indigenous students from seven different Kimberley and Pilbara schools. Our students were outstanding with Memphis winning the Most Valuable Player, Kyle Wunumurra, the Spirit Award and Kelwin Unghango won the Dunk Competition. Coen Wright, who has been engaging in remote learning off-site since Term 2, also made the trip to Derby to participate.

Contributing to this event provided many opportunities for personal development, a requirement of the Senior Years Learning Framework program that our students undertake in Year 11 and 12. In the lead up to the carnival, students participated in training sessions, they contributed to the excursion by assisting with cooking, cleaning and packing. They also engaged in a Social and Emotional Wellbeing session facilitated by Derby Aboriginal Health Service.

As with most things at Yiramalay, they are not what they seem on the surface, at this seemingly benign event our students grew in confidence and self-esteem, improved communication skills, employed teamwork and showed resilience and determination. A huge thank you to the Clontarf Foundation for allowing us to participate in this event, which used sport as a vehicle to foster positive relationships, experiences and connections. The carnival gave our students the opportunity to engage, socialise and network with Indigenous youth from all over the North West region.

### Brent Simons, Student Wellbeing Coordinator

#### Important Dates 2020

Fri 27 Nov	Year 12 Graduation	2021	
Fri 27 Nov	End of Term 4 Kimberley	Sat 29 Jan	Student pick-up
Wed 9 Dec	End of Term 4 Melbourne	Sun 30 Jan	Sunday program and Community Mob Meeting to begin Term 1
		Mon 1 Feb	Classes begin

The Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School is committed to keeping children safe.  
Trained teachers deliver the Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum to all students.