

OUR PLACES

overview of the project

This project was a joint venture between Nanima Preschool and Wellington Community Children's Centre and it produced a DVD and educational resources to target 3 to 5 year olds. The resources explained the importance of preserving, protecting and maintaining the environment, as well as the significance of the environment in Aboriginal life. The project encouraged children and families, both Aboriginal and non Aboriginal, to engage in ongoing reconciliation and community partnerships and it fostered a sense of belonging to the land.

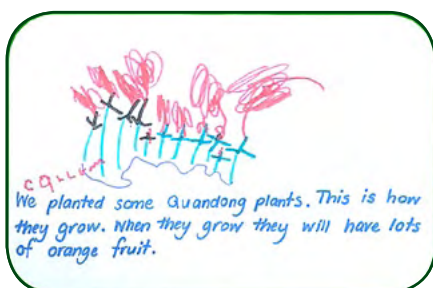
The funding of this project has also allowed resources relevant to the Wellington Aboriginal community and Wiradjuri Country to be purchased. This collection includes books on the native language, songs, art and history. This has helped the youth within the local Aboriginal community to reconnect with their cultural heritage and language.



Children's drawing depicting what they learnt from the project

how the project was carried out

At the beginning of the project, a management committee of the local Aboriginal community, preschool parents and school staff was established. The aim of this group was to provide guidance on how the project would be implemented and to source local support for the project's implementation. Support was garnered from the local Catchment Management Authority, Department of Industry and Investment and members of the local Aboriginal community.



Children's drawing depicting what they learnt from the project

The first stage of implementation involved a visit to each pre-school by a local Aboriginal identity who explained the history and cultural significance of the area. This was followed by a web of life task which involved children with how they fit in to the environment, how their actions can impact on it and discussions on making sure we don't damage the environment. This required tailoring existing resources to make them suitable for pre-school age children.

At the conclusion of in-class activities, plants used in traditional Indigenous culture, which were donated by the Department of Industry and Investment, were planted at the local common and at the two preschools. The significance of the plants to the Aboriginal community and the environment was explained to the children.

In the weeks following the site visit and plantings, the children were encouraged to draw pictures that illustrated what they had learnt from the program. A selection of these drawings were used in a calendar that was distributed throughout the pre-schools. A DVD of the area-specific resources used during the program was produced and distributed to key members of the community. The DVD included footage of the presentation given on the significance

of the area to Aboriginal history and culture, cultural activities including songs using the local Aboriginal dialect and a teachers' resource package with general information on Wiradjuri Country. The DVD and calendar were launched at Wellington Soldiers Club on 4 June 2008 and was attended by over 40 local residents.

outcomes now and in the future

Aboriginal people of the Wiradjuri tribe were relocated to Nanima Reserve at Wellington in 1910. To this day, the area remains an important meeting and camping place for local Aboriginal people, as well as an ancestral burial site. Through this project, local preschool children were taught the significance of these locations within their area, and the importance of protecting the environment and cultural heritage in the Wellington area by maintaining these sites for future generations to enjoy and learn from.

This project has resulted in partnerships forming between the two pre-schools and the local Aboriginal community. These groups plan to continue their alliances and do further work with the children of the area by incorporating Aboriginal culture and the environment into ongoing pre-school programs.

benefits, challenges & lessons learned

This project was successful in gaining support from local organisations, both government and non-government to assist with the production of age-appropriate resources that educated young people about Aboriginal cultural heritage values.

Through this project Indigenous and non-Indigenous children have been involved in activities that have raised their awareness of the traditional language, songs, dance, art and food used by the Wiradjuri tribe. The awareness and interest garnered by this program will assist with ongoing use of the traditional practices into the future.