

ALFABET

THE ALF'S END OF YEAR NEWSLETTER

In this issue:

SUMMER 2018

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Also:

An interview with Yorta Yorta
Elder and ALF tutor,
Anne Patmore-Cooper

Northern Australian Books
and Library Project in review

The latest developments in the
ALF'S digital literacy projects



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If you would like to support the ALF on a more regular basis – you can become a Monthly Supporter.

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CEO'S REPORT:

Dr Anthony Cree

In 2017, we have had a wonderful year with many high points. Our Northern Books and Library Program has been an outstanding success with over 50 Northern Territory schools benefiting from the generosity of our supporters. Every school has received hundreds of books with a grant to set up or maintain a library. This program has meant a lot to Aboriginal children and their teachers.

The wonderful Archibald family drove across Central Australia from Victoria to the Pilbara distributing sets of our Healthy Living Series to schools. The Healthy Living Series was commissioned by the ALF and exclusively used Aboriginal writers and artists. It has been enormously popular and the run of 90,000 copies is set to be replaced by a new edition.

Our long established after-school tutoring program is due to be supported in the new year by our open line distance education program. Soon it will be possible to have one on one tutoring from our headquarters in Melbourne and reach some of the remotest parts of Australia. We are especially keen to work in areas that don't have schools but have computer access.

Once again, our Literacy and Heritage Days have been a feature of the past 12 months. We hold 6 to 10 camps a year. In the morning, we concentrate or fast-tracked one to one literacy tuition, but in the afternoon, we

invite Elders and parents to provide an Aboriginal heritage program. Many endangered skills are being preserved - As well as painting, storytelling and bush tucker, weaving from native flax has also been taught recently.

Horse riding is also a popular feature of the program and enjoyed by all students attending. Beneath Mt Buninyong, students have the chance to unwind in the open air.

Finally, I would like to thank all our wonderful supporters. I hope you enjoy reading about our activities over the past 6 months and knowing that you have contributed to this work.

I wish you all a joyous and safe Christmas and a happy New Year.

Dr Anthony Cree,
CEO



MEET THE TEAM: Anne Patmore-Cooper

Anne Patmore-Cooper has worked with the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation for more than 25 years. In that time, she has been a wonderful supporter of all our programs, particularly Literacy and Heritage Camps, where she has often been a contributor; passing on her knowledge of culture to the next generation.

"I first met Anne in the early 1990's when she approached us to help tutor her three children. It was always a wonderful experience visiting Anne's home; lively and full of interest."

- Dr Tony Cree, CEO





How long have you been with the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation and how were you introduced?

I heard about the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation through the Co-op when my daughter Kieah was four. So over 25 years ago! I remember going out to a Camp at the Ballarat University, which used to last all week in those days. However, I was told I could go home after the first night – apparently I was telling the kids too many ghost stories!

Why is literacy so important?

I'm a lucky girl, I was taught to read at an early age and I thank my foster parents every day. I've had relatives who couldn't even spell their name. One of my nephews - all he could write was his mother's address. It took him months and months to learn, but if he was picked up by the police he could say and show them where his mother lived.

It's still happening, which is why I said at the last Literacy and Heritage Camp in Ballarat, "We're gonna start them from kindergarten now." We'll get the little ones in and we'll be able to teach them culture a lot easier.

Dominic, my grandson loves coming. He's learning to write his name, which is a bonus because when I think of all my relatives, especially my aunts and uncles who couldn't write and how it held them back. I remember when they'd be at bingo, they'd hold up a newspaper and pretend they

were reading. Really, they were listening to what was going on around them and looking around at other cards so they knew which boxes to put a line through.

I had lots of people who reinforced the importance of reading in my life. I remember Lindsay Owens - Uncle Lindsay. He'd throw the boomerangs and if one got stuck in a tree, I was the monkey that went up and got them! But when I would go to Peter's Ice Cream, he told me I had to read and spell the ice cream that I wanted. And that's how I learnt to read. He told me I wasn't allowed to have the same one the next time I came up to visit. He made sure I could read what I was getting.

My foster dad, he was a minimal reader. My mum was the reader. I'd always have to read the front part of the newspaper, and I'd turn it over and go straight to the sport and read the newspaper backwards. She'd ask me what it said, and I would reply, "Oh! Looks like we've got Bruce Doull back in! He didn't get suspended!" The Blues were my footy team and that was my way of learning and wanting to learn.

Why is it important for Indigenous children to learn about their heritage?

It's very important, I know because I missed out! The first real recognition of my heritage was when my foster dad and brothers had the opportunity to meet Lionel Rose. I didn't want to go, I thought it was only for

fathers and sons but my foster Dad said, "She's got more muscles than her brothers and I won't be going unless she can come!"

When he (Lionel Rose) found out there was Aboriginal people around, we got front row seats! I was there in a flannelet and jeans so I would look like I was a boy. I already had a short haircut and everyone thought I was.

Later, I remember meeting Sir Doug Nicholls at High School and he said, "You realise you all have mums and dads, don't you?"

So, having figures like these awaken me to my heritage was very important.

Who do you regard as your mentor who helped you discover your heritage?

Definitely my older brother's ex-wife, Moira. To me she had the heart of an angel and she made it easier to help me look for the family and get to know the family. She gave me things that only a big sister could give.

What Aboriginal Nation do you belong to?

I'm Yorta Yorta which is the middle of Echuca and Shepparton, right on the Murray.

What do you see the role of an Elder in the Indigenous Community?

I learnt a lot from my older brother while he was alive. Accepting responsibility for family and putting back the values we've lost.

That's where my brother left it off. I now hear, "You're head of the family now!" I think, "There's never been a woman head of the family!" There was always a male that stepped in, but there's none anymore, because of these problems that stem from a lack of literacy and numeracy.

The Sorry, yes, that heals a little bit, but when we have all other problems that need sorting out in this country, it's hard for us to overcome these obstacles.

What we do on a Friday is *Community on Friday*. It's craft, it's whatever you want to do. And if there are questions, we're all there. And this way, we're getting the young ones so they're not bored at home. And that's the problem with the young parents these days – they are so bored at home that things happen and they look to other ways alleviate that boredom and can make poor decisions.

What do you aspire for your grandchildren?

I'd love for them to have their dreams.

NORTHERN BOOKS & LIBRARY PROJECT

2017 IN REVIEW



Earlier this year, you may recall we commenced our Northern Australian Book and Library Project. After the initial contact made by The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation, a total of 58 schools and community groups in Northern Territory reached out to us with the request of boxes of books and library grant funds. It has been both overwhelming and heart-warming to assist so many schools where books and funds were desperately needed.

All of this would not have been possible without the support of our donors, schools, community groups and individuals donating quality books and funds to a very worthy cause. And it is for this reason, I would personally like to thank all involved for giving us the opportunity to make our Northern Australian Books & Library Project such a success.

I know from personal experience, that I want to know exactly how my donation is being used, "How will I know that what I am supporting is making a difference?" It has been my privilege to receive all the wonderful stories and photos

of smiling faces of the children holding the books that our supporters have provided. It reminds me of how vital our work is. Every child deserves a chance at a brighter future.

I thank you again, our supporters, for your continuous donations of funds and books. As you can now bare witness, that not only are they greatly appreciated, but that it is needed.

The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation, is constantly working towards bringing smiles to the faces of the children that need it most.

In January 2018 we will be continuing our Northern Australian Book & Library Project to reach out to the Remote Aboriginal Schools and Community Groups of Northern Western Australia and Northern Queensland). We ask that you continue to help make a difference in the lives of Aboriginal children, and to donate to our worthy cause.

Jacinta Humphries

Northern Books & Library Project Coordinator

Black Cockatoo

Aboriginal Story and Art Competition

WHO? Aboriginal youth aged 10-20 from rural or remote locations in Australia.
WHAT? Short story of up to 5,000 words and/or art piece in any medium.

Visit, hakeahustler.com.au/competition/ to enter.

Entries close 14th February, 2018 at 5pm.





Throughout the course of our Northern Books and Library Project, we have come into contact with some incredibly dedicated and inspiring educators at schools who face a range of complex challenges. Jen Cubillo has kindly written to us about the important work being done at Wulagi Primary School to help children feel safe, secure and engaged in their learning.

Wulagi Primary School is a small school in the Northern Suburbs of Darwin. We are a multicultural school of about 250 children with approximately 1/3 of our families identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Within our school we work with many children that have experienced complex trauma, whether that be through domestic violence, poverty, generational trauma or experiences fleeing as refugees.

The work we do within our school is more than just education. We are also focused on the social and emotional wellbeing of each child. This can be both an emotional and financial burden on staff, but we love the work we do and the children we work with.

We are trying to develop flexible learning options within our school to assist in supporting our children with different learning needs. We established a flexible learning class this year. This is a small class of children that were struggling to be engaged in the mainstream learning environment. Subsequently these children were rarely at school and when they were at school it was difficult to get them into the classroom setting. We were seeing these children displaying challenging behaviours and suspensions were high. This year, this group of children have increased attendance, decreased suspensions and are

feeling safe in their classroom environment. We have a long way to go, but feel we are on the right path.

In other areas of the school we are differentiating learning programs and working with small groups of similar ability to assist children in their learning. We also run a social and emotional learning program across the school. This is just a very small example of the work we do.

I contacted the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation earlier this year following a break in of our school and destruction of the library, which is central to our learning spaces. Unfortunately the damage was so great that most of our books and furniture were destroyed in the break in.

The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation has been very generous in the donation of books to our library and providing us with a small amount of funds to assist in not only the purchase of some new books for our children but also some resources that will assist us in supporting some of our more vulnerable students and their families.

We can't thank them enough for their support.

Jen Cubillo
Special Education Support Officer, Wulagi Primary School



BOOKS FOR LEARNING

This year, our Books for Learning program was a stunning success. While we have focused our efforts towards Australia's North – throughout the year we have distributed thousands of books to families, schools and community groups in every state.

Often schools, will approach the ALF with requests to support borrowing initiatives to increase interest in literacy or use the books as an incentive for attendance.

There are also community groups who form weekly reading groups with Indigenous families – others simply wish to distribute books throughout their community – not only for children but adults.

We have been enormously fortunate to have been supported by individuals, schools and companies who have donated books. We were inundated with donations throughout the later half of the year when many organisations held book drives in support of NAIDOC Week and Book Week.

Some outstanding contributions, we would like to acknowledge were: Annandale North Primary School (who contributed the single biggest donation we have received), Lower Plenty Primary School, Ruyton Girl's School, Melbourne Girls Grammar School, All Saints Catholic College, Parkwood Green Primary School, Melbourne Girls College, St Brendan's Catholic Primary School, Forrest Primary School, Ormond College and the Newport Junior Football Club. I would also like to acknowledge Origin Energy and Commonwealth Bank for their book drives and the individual efforts of Katie Hanlon and Indigo Cooper – who collected books as part of her Scouts Promise Challenge.



Top: Students from Ruyton Girls School
Left top: Books donated by Annandale North Primary School
Left bottom: Volunteers from Swinburne Golden Key
Right bottom: Jacinta accepting books from Indigo Cooper



DIGITAL LITERACY PROJECTS

Coming in 2018

Aboriginal Literacy Foundation Online Tutoring Program

For many years we have been aware of the difficulties faced by remote and regional Aboriginal students in reaching schools and colleges. In Northern Australia, the sheer distance makes ordinary schooling extremely difficult especially in a district where English is a second language.

In Victoria, approximately one third of the small country schools were closed down several decades ago as a cost-cutting measure. The result is that about a quarter of our regional Indigenous students are more than forty kilometres from a suitable school. The round trip is both expensive in petrol and tiring for children.

Our new program will not replace schools but certainly be a backup when children have periods of absence. The program will operate on a one to one basis with qualified teachers (with VIT and Working with children certification) tutoring through a modified Skype-like system.

It has been trialled both in Australia and overseas and we feel it will provide wonderful service.

Digital Literacy Hub

In the new year, we will be redeveloping our Digital Literacy Hub. It will contain an online library with thousands of children's books, including our own Healthy Living Series.

New features will include a 'read aloud' feature, that will give children the ability to hear the words on the page.

For the first time, we will also be translating our Healthy Living Series in Indigenous languages. While translating directly from English to an Indigenous language, the context of the story will provide a valuable reference point for bilingual students.

There is evidence to suggest that a child fluent in their first language will have a greater capacity to learn their second language. It is difficult to find the right balance between preserving Indigenous people's vital oral traditions with learning the language to engage with mainstream services. We believe this will be an important tool to support both aims.



Adult Illiteracy in remote NT

A new report conducted by Charles Darwin University has revealed the alarming rate of adult illiteracy in remote Northern Territory communities. From a sample group of 660 people from the communities of Galiwin'ku, Yirrkala, Gunbalanya, Maningrida, Tennant Creek and Yuendumu, it was found that only 15% of adults tested had literacy, language and numeracy skills required to find employment, pursue vocational training or higher education.

According to Professor Adrian Miller, this new research shows, "While we may seem to have looked after the young, looked after the teenagers - built their English literacy - this Report shows that (despite best efforts) they are not getting the English and numeracy they need in school."

Implementing adult education programmes in this sparsely populated region has proven a challenging task. Programmes often suffer from inconsistent funding or are based on 'fly-in, fly-out' models that leave communities with no capacity for ongoing support. Other programmes expect a level of literacy that is above that of many adults whereas others are deployed in regions that exclude vast numbers of potential participants.

There are many issues that come to bear on education in remote communities and one of the most contentious is how best to balance the oral traditions of communities in their own languages with the necessity to learn English to better engage with the mainstream services. Over 54% of Indigenous people in the NT speak a language other than English at home, a figure that rises to 80% in very remote communities.

In 2016 and 2017 the Action Network on Aboriginal adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy held workshops at Charles Darwin University to discuss strategies for community-based initiatives and promote greater Indigenous involvement and leadership in programmes. In these workshops, parents and Elders expressed a desire for children to develop literacy skills in English side by side with their own languages.

There is increasing evidence to suggest that it is not only possible to strike a balance within schools but that it is often to the greater benefit of the child: According to an analysis by the Commonwealth Government Office for the Arts, an Indigenous child fluent in their first language is more likely to attend school, obtain a post-school qualification and have better physical and mental health. Increasingly, schools with Indigenous students are embracing first languages as part of strategies to keep these students engaged.

Charles Darwin University's report concludes that more research in the area of adult illiteracy is required and LLN specialists in conjunction with community leaders are needed to develop diverse strategies appropriate for each community.

It's clear there is a strong willingness for change among parents of these communities - and what more powerful tool could there be to nurture a child's education than a literate parent?

TUTORING PROGRAMS

After School Homework and Mentoring Groups

The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation started their after school homework groups in regional Victoria 20 years ago. From these early foundations in Ballarat, we now have homework groups in Hamilton, Bairnsdale, Melton and Bacchus Marsh with new groups being founded in Warrnambool and interstate in New South Wales and South Australia in the new year. After school homework groups are often more successful for Indigenous students than conventional classrooms.

The tutoring usually takes place in small groups or one on one, and the students say they really enjoy being in an Indigenous environment with students from a similar background to themselves. Most of our teachers have been tutoring Aboriginal children for many years and are very experienced in this type of work. We really appreciate the support that we get from parents, guardians and local Elders.

We try and make our homework groups as homely as possible with end of year Christmas parties and birthday parties for individual students.

Our aim is to raise the children's literacy levels to that of their non-Indigenous peers in their class at school. Many have said how much nicer it is to be able to read from the whiteboard and how much more they are accepted by classmates and teachers.

We feel this work is really important for young Indigenous Australians. By successfully completing their education, they have an opportunity to benefit from all of the advantages of living in Australia.

Tutoring in Schools

Over the last two years, the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation has commenced its Tutoring in Schools Program. We have established tutoring programs in Melbourne in the inner suburbs of Collingwood and Fitzroy. Whilst we commenced tutoring by providing an after school homework group in government schools, this is now extended to the Catholic system with the most recent school being St Joseph's in Collingwood. The Aboriginal Literacy Foundation also tutors at schools in rural Victoria and New South Wales. We are particularly pleased to have schools in Hamilton, Horsham and most recently, Ballarat (the Ballarat Christian College in Sebastopol).

These days, schools are really stretched with their resources and providing extra tuition for young Indigenous students can be hard to justify. When we are contacted by a school, we are usually able to provide a fully trained teacher with Working with Children Certification and often registered with the ATAS (Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme). This program can make a real difference to Aboriginal students and often makes a difference between dropping out or completing school and taking up post-school studies, leading to an apprenticeship or a TAFE qualification, and finally employment.

Literacy and Heritage Camps

Over the past twelve months we have held eight Literacy and Heritage Camps. This is a tradition of the Aboriginal Literacy Foundation which goes back more than twenty years. Originally, we used to hold the camps in the school holidays at the Students' Residence at Ballarat University.

In those days, camps lasted about a week and included overnight accommodation. Because of the time it was held, we often had students from as far away as the Northern Territory.

Nowadays, the camps are only held at weekends and most of our students come from Western Victoria or the outer suburbs of Melbourne. However, most of the traditions and the teaching methods are preserved. We still spend all morning with one to one tutoring and in the afternoon, we have the heritage studies provided by Elders and parents.

For more than twenty years, the recreation has always been horse-riding. It's a wonderful thing to see our students setting off for an hour or two on horseback after a days' studying indoors. The camps have always been popular with students, parents and Elders and teachers often comment on how much students seem to benefit.

None of this would be possible without our supporters and also the volunteers who generously give their time.



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