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Indigenous Education In Australia:
Policy, Participation and Praxis

Marnie O'Bryan, Prof. Mark Rose

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ABOUT THE E-JOURNAL

The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal is based within the Graduate School of Education at The University of Melbourne, Australia. The journal promotes multi-disciplinary research in the Arts and Education and arose out of a recognised need for knowledge sharing in the field. The publication of diverse arts and cultural experiences within a multi-disciplinary context informs the development of future initiatives in this expanding field. There are many instances where the arts work successfully in collaboration with formerly non-traditional partners such as the sciences and health care, and this peer-reviewed journal aims to publish examples of excellence.

Valuable contributions from international researchers are providing evidence of the impact of the arts on individuals, groups and organisations across all sectors of society. The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal is a clearing house of research which can be used to support advocacy processes; to improve practice; influence policy making, and benefit the integration of the arts in formal and non-formal educational systems across communities, regions and countries.

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Volume 4, Issue 1

Indigenous Education In Australia: Policy, Participation and Praxis

Guest Editors

Marnie O'Bryan

Prof. Mark Rose

THEME

This special edition of the UNESCO Observatory E-Journal focuses on education for and about the First Peoples of Australia and bears witness to the many faces of Indigenous education in Australia. It testifies to a complex landscape; places on a map, places in minds and places in spirit that taken together present a snapshot of the tone and dimension of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in early 2015.

Indigenous education policy is framed by a bi-partisan commitment to 'closing the gap'. In some instances, Indigenous leaders are framing the debate over how this is best achieved. At the same time, non-Indigenous educators are increasingly becoming aware that equality and mutual respect can only be established once the Australian community opens its mind to the ancient wisdom and the true stories of this place. Many of the articles in this publication identify the 'gap' as an epistemological divide and argue that, like any bridge, education measures aimed at 'closing the gap' need to be constructed simultaneously from both sides. To that end, a number of papers focus on initiatives being developed and explored by mainstream schools to give authentic voice to the perspectives of First Australians for the benefit of non-Indigenous students.

COVER ART

Majority Rule
Michael Cook

*Courtesy of the artist
and Andrew Baker
Art Dealer, Brisbane*

The papers in Volume One, '**Indigenous Education in Australia: Policy, Participation and Praxis**', are all concerned with how Western educational structures and institutions work for and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Volume Two of the Journal is entitled '**Indigenous Education In Australia: Place, Pedagogy and Epistemic Assumptions**'. Each of the articles in this volume pertains to the education experiences of people living in remote Australia.

The articles in this publication take the reader through a rich multidisciplinary tapestry that points to the breadth and complexity of the Indigenous education landscape in Australia today. The papers are honest and true to the heterogeneous communities that are the First Peoples of Australia. Similarly, the poetry and artworks that appear here bear witness to the breadth, depth and diversity of artistic talent and tradition in this country. Taken together, they challenge the reader to move beyond a simplistic quest for 'the silver bullet' to redress disparity in education outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. They encourage reflection, innovation, reciprocity, respect and empowerment through education.

We recommend each and every article.

Prof. Mark Rose & Marnie O'Bryan
Guest Editors

Accompanying Piece



Rainbow Serpent
Kaylene Marr

Courtesy of the Artist

The Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School - a different model of school and catalyst for change

Dr Helen Drennen

Principal

Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School

Mr Ned McCord

Executive Director

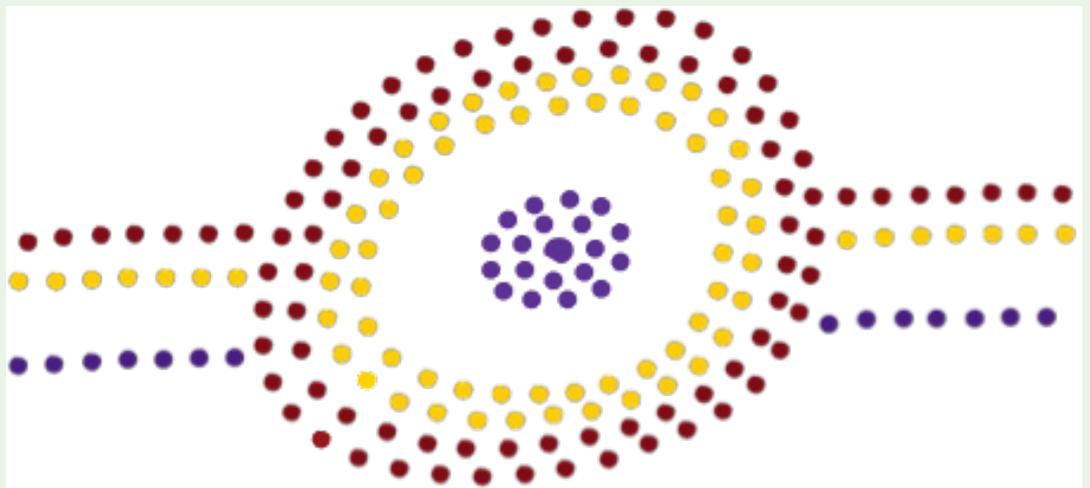
Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School

ABSTRACT

Demonstrating respect for indigenous cultures in the context of existing discrimination and disadvantage is a common challenge in countries such as Australia, where an immigrant culture dispossessed an existing Indigenous population. This paper tells the story of the development of the Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School - a new model of school shaped by a vision of learning across cultures between two communities in Australia, one Aboriginal with 40,000 years of history in the Fitzroy Valley of the remote outback Kimberley of Western Australia, the other, Wesley College Melbourne, rich in culture too, with a history of nearly 150 years as one of Australia's oldest established independent schools.

KEYWORDS

Culture, language, partnership, education, studio school



Whilst we are not Aboriginal people, these are our views and experiences from working with people in communities both Aboriginal and non Aboriginal. This is our story of the Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School.

YIRAMALAY/WESLEY
STUDIO SCHOOL



INTRODUCTION TO THE STORY

It is not often that people of like mind, but with very different life stories, meet and find in one another the wherewithal to bring about significant change. The story of the Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School is one of those stories. It is a story about transformation, not just for the students who are part of the school and its programs, but for the families, staff, friends and supporters of the school connected across the great expanse of Australia between the Kimberley of far north Western Australia and the south eastern state of Victoria at Wesley College in Melbourne.

Education for many Aboriginal children in Australia is not working in its current form. Traditionally Aboriginal culture is passed orally from adult to child through story telling. Listening to personal stories for Aboriginal people is a powerful way of learning and passing on knowledge. So, too, is *learning on country* (Fogarty 2012). Today mainstream education for Aboriginal children in Australia has not really recognized the power of *learning on country*, and many Aboriginal family members and guardians have not had the education to understand the value of early years learning through reading, in another educational culture in which knowledge is transferred largely in written form (Biddle 2007, {Biddle & Bath, 2013 #164}).

For Aboriginal people, culturally appropriate education on *country* has played a significant part in community building (Altman 2012). On *country* learning has united Aboriginal families over generations with a common purpose and created a sense of pride in the learning environment and the confidence and momentum to participate (Fogarty 2012, Osborne & Guenther 2013). It is not surprising, therefore, that Australia's national educational data, which relies on National testing regimes, consistently shows that literacy and numeracy attainment for Aboriginal children is below the national average, especially in remote areas. Year 12 completion rates and results are also significantly below the norm (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2014). (Altman 2012)

Economic prospects for Aboriginal students in the north of Australia are limited. In the pastoral industry in northern Australia, when Aboriginal people regain their country through cattle station purchases, the building of a successful business is weighed down by many obstacles and difficulties. Whilst there are many first class Aboriginal cattlemen in the Northern Australian Pastoral Industry, the opportunity for them to succeed as landowners and managers is limited. Employment in the mining industry is also limited as without appropriate education, opportunity is restricted to lower level jobs such as gardening and cleaning, as many do not even have a driving license (Personal Communications).

Education for Aboriginal people is imperative as it is the key to accessing the opportunities that the rest of us enjoy. Australians enjoy one of the highest life expectancies in the world. But this is not so for Aboriginal people whose life expectancy is cut short by 20 years or more (Biddle & Yap 2010). Aboriginal mothers die at triple the rate of other Australian women (Johnson S 2014) and they experience higher rates of heart disease, kidney disease and diabetes, just to name a few (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2014). But closing this gap is not just about health and education. It is about acceptance and the elimination of discrimination. Aboriginal people need to be part of the decision making process when it comes to looking after their people, their country and their culture, and in the Fitzroy Crossing in the Kimberley in north Western Australia, many efforts to facilitate change are succeeding.

These have included new laws on alcohol restriction led by the Aboriginal women of the Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre in Fitzroy Crossing, the establishment of a Men's Shed, the opening of a new child care centre Baya Gawi, the establishment of a world leading research program on Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD) and the opening of the Marulu Unit offering help to parents and care givers of children with FASD. They have established local businesses such as

Mangkaja Arts and purchased others such as the Fitzroy Crossing Lodge, the local supermarket, the Fitzroy Crossing Pub and the Ngiyali Roadhouse and Back Packers accommodation, and established many micro businesses in eco tourism, construction, and the pastoral industry (Personal Communications).

Partnerships are playing a significant part too, and the partnership that has led to the establishment of the Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School is with one of Australia's leading independent schools. Wesley College in Melbourne is a privileged school but with its commitment to innovation in education, and to bringing about change, side-by-side with the Bunuba people, a transformation is taking place in both communities for all to see.

For Wesley students, with real life experience of the bush in Australia's remote outback, and of the history of Australia's first people, a change is happening. Students and teachers are learning much about Aboriginal language and culture, the art of story telling, of listening, of *learning on country* bringing new understanding of their environment at home and up north. They are learning much about the future of northern Australia and the business and employment opportunities of Australia's last frontier.

But most significant of all, they are experiencing how much there is to learn from Aboriginal people and their culture and their respect for land. They are learning what it really means to be Australian forming relationships built on respect and care. Many students at Wesley in Melbourne who have been to Yiramalay are requesting to return for a Gap year or for employment after further study.





PARTNERSHIP FOR A DIFFERENT MODEL OF EDUCATION

Since its opening in August 2010, with 9 residential local Aboriginal students and 15 Year 10 Melbourne Induction students, the Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School (Yiramalay) has grown to an enrolment in August 2014 of 40 residential Aboriginal students across Years 10, 11 and 12, and 84 Melbourne students who participated in the Induction programs for Year 10 across the year.

Since August 2010, Yiramalay has been a place of learning for over 470 students and staff (local and Melbourne based) across the senior years 10, 11 and 12, from communities on opposite sides of Australia. All have been learning side by side in a curriculum of a new and different kind. At the end of 2014, the third group of Year 12 students to move through the school will graduate from Yiramalay.

The Fitzroy Valley in far north Western Australia comprises several small communities of approximately 4800 people mostly of Aboriginal descent. The biggest community in the valley is in the town of Fitzroy Crossing which is located on the banks of the Fitzroy River and has a population of 1500 people. There are four main Aboriginal languages spoken in the Valley including: Bunuba, Nyikina, Gooniyandi and Walmajarri.

The Bunuba people are the traditional owners of Leopold Downs and Fairfield Cattle Stations and are fiercely independent and proud of their success in managing their stations without government assistance since the 1990s. Recently they entered into a partnership lease agreement with the Australian (Personal Communication) Agricultural Company for the day-to-day management of both cattle stations, to help them grow their business and to develop their people in order to take their place in the future of the Australian cattle industry. Their two cattle stations cover an area of 1.4 million acres in the Fitzroy Valley and are running about 20,000 head of cattle.

Ten years ago, in November 2004, the Bunuba people of the Fitzroy Valley entered into another partnership, an educational partnership, with one of Australia's oldest and most established schools, Wesley College in Melbourne. Like Bunuba, Wesley College Melbourne also shares a deep commitment to learning and to growing, and in this case, through real life experience for students and staff, learning about the culture and languages of Australia's Aboriginal first peoples and the history of our great land.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

The stated aims of the partnership encapsulated in the Memorandum of Understanding signed by both Bunuba and Wesley College communities in 2004 were to:

- Expand the horizons and life choice expectations of our youth
- Enrich and enhance the whole of life experiences for both communities
- Develop cultural understanding and a capacity to relate to others
- Support and to enhance community cohesion

From the beginning the focus for both partners was equally about change and growth, learning side by side through education to bring about transformation for both. One of the first actions for Wesley was for Wesley students and staff to attend the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre Festival (KALLAC) in July 2005 to launch the partnership in the north. This was followed by 15 young Aboriginal students and elders from Fitzroy Crossing visiting Wesley in Melbourne for the ceremonial launch of the partnership in the south.

Two important Wesley teacher secondments to the Kimberley Languages Resource Centre in Fitzroy Crossing followed in 2005 to assist in the development of curriculum support material to support the preservation and teaching of Bunuba language. These teacher secondments resulted in a ground-breaking development of curriculum resource material for Primary School aged children to learn Bunuba and Walmajarri languages which were then introduced to Wesley students in Melbourne as part of their International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (PYP) in 2006.

Both Bunuba and Walmajarri elders from the Fitzroy Valley subsequently travelled to Melbourne each year to teach the PYP units of inquiry in Bunuba and Walmajarri language to children in Years 4 and 5 and this practice has continued ever since.

In July 2007, Wesley College female staff and students were also very fortunate to be invited to attend the Aboriginal Women's Bush meeting convened by the women of the Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre in Fitzroy Crossing. The first Women's Bush meeting, and the two annual meetings which followed, in which Wesley female staff and girls also participated, were very important events in shaping the ideas for the Studio School. At these Women's Bush meetings held on Gooniyandi, Walmajarri and Bunuba country, many of the significant issues facing Aboriginal children and families, including mental health and well-being, loss of culture and

language, alcoholism and domestic violence, foetal alcohol syndrome disorder and youth suicide, were discussed. The importance of education as the vehicle for change was a constant theme and, not surprisingly, the idea of the Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School took hold (Wesley College 2014) < >.

The importance of *learning on country*, of language and culture at the heart of the curriculum, and of living as part of it, and accessing each other's community, were fundamental principles on which the Studio School was conceived. So, too, was a long view.

THE LONG VIEW

Both Bunuba and Wesley partners were deeply mindful of the failed attempts of so many educational initiatives to close the gap in opportunity and outcome for Aboriginal students in schools across Australia.

In establishing Yiramalay, both partners signed a twenty year legal agreement enshrining the seriousness of their long term commitment for change.

A MODEL OF SCHOOL TO CROSS A CULTURAL DIVIDE

Of the many sources of inspiration for how a new school could take shape, where students from both communities could learn from one another, one stood out. It was the model of school conceived by one of the world's great architects and teachers, Frank Lloyd Wright in early 20th century America. Frank Lloyd Wright's school of architecture, known as Taliesin (Taliesin 2015) is an outstanding example of the notion of school as Studio - a place where learning is hands-on and focussed on making and building relationships, where the school itself responds to and travels across country according the season, where students and staff move from one environment and community to another, where *learning to do* and *learning to live with* are as important as *learning to know*, but most important of all, where *learning to be* is valued as the highest of all (Wesley College 2015). Frank Lloyd Wright's school, Taliesin, operates in the state of Wisconsin during the hot summer, and moves south to the state of Arizona when the harsh northern winter arrives. It is an inspirational example of the concept of studio in action and one from which the ideas for Yiramalay were shaped.

How Yiramalay found physical form is a great testament to the strength of the partnership between Wesley College, as the educational provider investing financial capital for infrastructure, the teaching staff, professional development programs and curriculum resourcing, and Bunuba, as cultural partners, who invested cultural capital, donated the land and three houses on the land excised from Leopold Downs pastoral lease, and financial capital for buildings, and Aboriginal staff to work at the school.

Significantly, the site of the Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School was offered by the Bunuba people. It is a traditional Bunuba living area and is now excised from the pastoral lease of Leopold Downs. Traditional owner, Kaylene Marr, and her children, who lived off site when the school was built, moved back to reside again when it opened and now lives there when the school is in session, and moves with the school as a cultural advisor and mentor.

The name “Yiramalay” comes from the Yiramalay Spring and the school is named the Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School in recognition of its two partners, Bunuba and Wesley College forming one community of many cultures. It is located approximately 80km northwest of Fitzroy Crossing and 400km east of Broome in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. It began for Year 10 in August 2010 and was officially opened in May 2011.

Today, it is registered as an independent school in Western Australia for Years 10,11 and 12 and is in session at Yiramalay during the dry season (Terms 2 and 3). In the wet season (Terms 4 and 1) the Studio School moves to Melbourne where it is located within Wesley College at the Glen Waverley campus. The two different locations and residential nature of Yiramalay allow students and staff to be fully immersed in the culture and the local community in both locations whether in the Kimberley or in Melbourne.





For all students, local Aboriginal or from Melbourne, the Studio School experience starts with an Induction program at Yiramalay at Year 10. Six Induction programs are now offered across the year starting in March through to late October. On successful completion of the Induction program, students can enrol in the three year Yiramalay program and study a range of options within the Senior Years Learning Framework developed by the Australian Council of Education and Research (ACER 2010). In this framework, which is available at either Standard or Advanced level, students complete academic requirements and must develop competencies in both industry and personal/social learning. The industry learning offers a range of options from agriculture, cattle, ecotourism, and aged and child care, to the arts. For all students, competencies in personal and social learning develop skills in communication, cultural interaction, personal presentation and leadership for building community.



The Studio School is providing culturally appropriate education on country and this is playing a significant part in building community and developing future options for children to serve their community. Families are strengthened when they are involved with their children's education and families within a community are united with a common purpose. When citizens of a community are striving to better themselves, forward momentum is created for improvement in other areas – such as economic participation, social interaction and improved health and welfare.



IMPACT AND CHANGE

In 2013 preparation began for a self study review of the Studio School with independent verification to be undertaken in 2014. The key objective of the review was to evaluate community understanding of the aspirations, nature and purpose of the school, and its impact on student learning.

The review has gathered information for analysis relating to the key factors which affect student learning including: curriculum and educational programs, the teaching and learning environment, leadership, governance and accountability, and family and community engagement.

The review has been evidence-based and inclusive of the multiple perspectives of each stakeholder group, especially the Aboriginal members of the Fitzroy Valley community.

Preliminary results of the review indicate a number of areas where success has been achieved. Across all stakeholder groups, there is a broadly shared understanding of the vision and values of the school. There is clear appreciation of the Studio School model, of the centrality of language and culture, of real life experience, of learning in residence to negotiate diversity and difference, of learning on country, the development of the whole person, and movement between the Kimberley and Melbourne. Optimism and commitment of staff to the vision and values of the program is strong. So, too, is support for two way learning.

There has been measurable improvement in student attendance (compared with their previous schools), in a demonstrated readiness to learn and to engage in two way learning, in measurable improvements in student health, and in the positive impact shown through the post-graduation destinations of Yiramalay students.

At Yiramalay, success in re-engaging students in their schooling is not measured by a simple calculation of the percentage of students who commence Year 10 and then complete Year 12. Rather, success is measured by the percentage of students who completed the Year 10 program and who then either continue at Yiramalay to complete the Year 12 program, or who enrol at another school, or are successful in gaining employment. The table below shows student retention and success to date.

Student Retention and Success

** Completed Year 12 data for 2012 and 2013 Intake Years are estimates based on current trends.*

Other: includes students still connected with the school who left to have a child or deal with a mental health issue

Total % Successful Students: students who either completed Year 12 with Yiramalay, enrolled at another school or gained employment as a percentage of those who completed the Year 10 program

Intake Year	Intake Total	Completed Year 10 Program	Completed Year 12	Enrol at another school	Employed	Other	Unknown	Total % Successful Students
2010	7	7 (100%)	5 (72%)	0 (0%)	1 (14%)	1 (14%)	0 (0%)	86%
2011	9	5 (56%)	3 (60%)	0 (0%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	0 (0%)	80%
2012	15	13 (87%)	4 (31%)*	4 (31%)	2 (15%)	2 (15%)	1(8%)	77%
2013	21	16 (76%)	15 (94%)*	1 (6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	100%
2014	21	Data not yet available						

There are areas identified, too, where the school’s improvement agenda has focussed. Setting regular learning targets for students and staff, a more comprehensive tracking of an individual’s progress, and a systematic approach to documenting teaching approaches, are three examples where changes have already been made.

A key question that has underlined the process of review is that of sustainability. The review has sought to gain and use insights relating to sustainability of current Studio School structures, policies, procedures and practices to inform planning for the future. The final report from this review will be available early in 2015 and will provide direction for the next stage of development for Yiramalay.

What follows are student reflections on their experience and the impact on their lives.



FROM THE STUDENTS

Johanna Hoad, Year 12 Kimberley Graduate Student 2012

When I first started in the Yiramalay program I felt nervous, and shame. But after some time I felt great. I felt better because we local students became friends with the Melbourne students. We introduced our names and we welcomed them to our country.

Last year I graduated from Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School, I felt so happy and proud that I finished. Now I am happy to be back in Melbourne as a mentor for the new students, and I will go to TAFE to study more. The program is getting bigger and better, and I am happy to be part of it.



Charmaine Lissan, Year 11 Kimberly Student 2014

My thoughts about Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School when I first started at Yiramalay I felt shame. I was nervous and didn't know what to do. This is my third year at the school and now I feel happy all the time. I love going to classes, joining in activities and going camping with the mob.

My life has changed a lot since my first induction but I'm happy that I can still be at school. I love having my son with me and Arkelleo really is a Melbourne baby! I don't know any other young mums that are still able to go to school.

My favorite thing that I've done this term was going to the Apology Concert at the Sidney Meyer Music Bowl - there were lots of famous people and we got to see Uncle Archie Roach, another proud Aboriginal like me.



Odette Rogers, Year 11 Kimberley Student 2014

I started at Yiramalay last year. When I did I felt lots of emotions - Nervous, Excited, Happy, and Scared & Anxious! I first heard about Yiramalay from my grandma. She told me that it was school doing lots of good things kids from the Kimberley. Being part Yiramalay has let me do lots of great stuff. There have been lots of things that the program has given me the opportunity to do such as seeing snow!! I have also been able to do mountain bike riding, go to the beach and get around big cities like Melbourne in Trams, Trains and even Limos! I been able to meet lots of new people from all around the Kimberley, Melbourne and even Norway.



Corbyn Munda, Year 10 Kimberley Student 2014

I first heard about the Yiramalay School when I drove past it on the way to Roebourne from Fitzroy Crossing. My pop and grand-pop told me about it, telling me it was a place where you could do fun stuff like riding horses after you did your duties in the morning. They also said they said it's where I could learn about Country - how to look after it, its history and its people (like Jandamarra). Since I've started I've managed to meet lots of people from outside where I grew up in Roebourne - mobs from Gove Island, Melbourne, Norway, Wangkijunka, Derby, China, England, One Arm Point, Billiluna and Halls Creek - HEAPS of places. The people are really nice. I like it here because it's quiet and I feel safe - different from my old school. The food is REALLY good too - I'm full all the time from eating three good meals a day. It's the best.

Kaylene Marr
welcoming Peter
to Country

Delana Lawford, Peter
Sun, Kymah Xavier
and Lorinda Brooking
at the horse yards



Peter Sun, Year 10 Melbourne Induction Student 2013 - a Chinese Perspective

赤土，绿地，繁星点点；险山，俊水，延绵不绝。放之全西澳皆准的风光，在 Yiramalay 独一无二的文化扎根其上时，绽放出不同的光彩。

A unique culture on top of the typical outback landscape makes the Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School.

样传奇的文化。

Yiramalay, 在地图上找不到的一，和千万的红色尘埃一起，被 Bunuba 领地的山水环抱。火山岩一般的山峰是这远离尘世古老土地的脊梁，荷叶掩映的流水是大地汨汨的乳汁。自然吝啬地将树叶抽干成指天的尖刺，却在 Yiramalay 慷慨解囊。而在这鬼斧神工背后，还有同

Yiramalay, a pin point too small to find on the map, is embraced by the mountains as well as the water of Bunuba. Mother Nature sucks the leaves on the plants into the spikes, but simultaneously lavished on this land. Rocks, as if made of steaming lava, constructed this remote place; running water, as refreshing as melting ice, made up the complement of this dusty soil. Behind all these natural significance, there is a culture that is no less significant than the land itself.

Bunuba 是这里的土著文化主体。俊美的土地孕育着传奇的文化。峭壁上风蚀的壁画，岩洞上高不可攀的神明的肖像，一笔一划地代替着文字，千万年地静述着同样绝伦的故事。中国文明是成熟的土著文化，作为中国人，似乎对 Bunuba 有一种对方块字的熟悉。透过藏在岩石底部欧洲人的画像能看得出对外来者的敬畏，透过有十二根手指的神明图腾能看得出自我的渺小和对自然的虔诚，而在 Windjana Gorge 间的浅滩上席地而坐时，耳畔便有“两岸猿声啼不住”的回声... ..

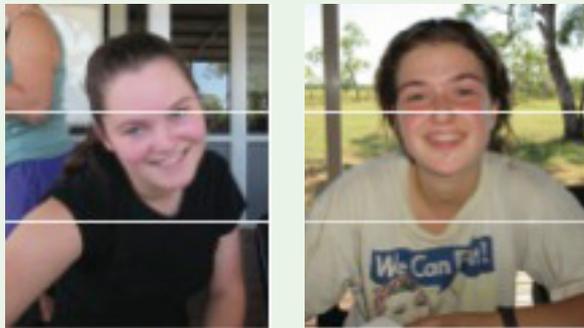
Bunuba, the local culture, is one that enriched by heroes and wonders. From the eroding drawing on the cliff to the sacred portrait of the god, pictures are telling the eternal stories that never get eroded by the time. China gave birth to a highly developed indigenous culture. As a person from that culture, I have a familiarity towards Bunuba. I can feel how devout the people are towards the Nature and how powerless an individual is in comparison with the whole.

在 Yiramalay/Wesley 学校，土著文化和西方教育并存。学习如何在果壳上刻画，是用雕刻刀描摹朴实的民风。在树下听那勇抗白人暴政的土著英雄 Jandamarra 的故事，很自然地非西方的视角将那段历史铭记。树枝窜起高高的火焰，草

药烟里的欢迎仪式，暗藏道理的鬼故事，小卡车后座和当地同学的闲言碎语，这里的一切让我有幸从非西方的视角近距离观察这里的文化，洞悉各种文化差异后的观念，沉思如何在这个时代将Bunuba和我们的文化合璧前进。

At Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School, western education and indigenous philosophy are bred together. We learn how to convert our understanding of the land into sculptures on nuts. We listen to the story of Jandamarra in the shade of trees. We start fires and we go through the smoke ceremony; we hold up the ears for allegories and we laugh with local friends in the back of trucks. I feel fortunate for viewing the world from a nonwestern perspective, perceiving the differences and mutuality between the cultures and thinking how to have a deeper understanding of each other and collaborate in the future.

Yiramalay 似乎是这个世界里的一块飞地。而Yiramalay/Wesley学校让我无隙地触摸他的心跳。Yiramalay is an island; an island isolated from the anxious world. The Yiramalay/Wesley School built a bridge, from physically up to spiritually, between us and the antediluvian land.



Annabel Henderson-Miller and Isabella Christensen-Lustig, Year 10 Melbourne Induction Students 2013

Signing up was an easy decision despite entering the unknown for three weeks with the closest town a solid 2 hour drive away. Wesley College students were told to expect the locals to be shy and timid in terms of their interactions because we were the first group they would encounter. This was not the case as we managed to connect with them on a level the staff did not expect to occur so rapidly. One of the first memorable moments for the Melbourne girls was their willingness to open up and truthfully share their culture, stories and experiences.

Shortly upon arrival, we were welcomed to their land by Kaylene Marr, by pouring water over our hands and head to allow us the right to remain on their land and swim in their waters Another initiation we were involved in was a smoking ceremony, where we step through a cloud of smoke. We were privileged enough to witness a sacred dance and chant, which was foreign, yet intriguing to watch. One of the first significant bonding experiences was a basketball game, that almost every person both local and Melbourne participated in. Cadjeput was a popular site as people were able to cool off and muck around together as one. Here people swam, swung off ropes and climbed trees all to each other's amusement.

So far, Yiramalay has proved to be an eye opening and incredible experience to be a part of, especially for the Melbourne students who otherwise might never have had the opportunity to experience.



Jarl Ziccone, Year 10 Victorian College for the Deaf Induction Student 2013

I'd like to say that I'm grateful, very grateful, for having the opportunity to be able to experience what I have learnt so far about the Aboriginal culture, their stories, legacies, lifestyle, area, spiritual beliefs, and their behaviour. It has given me a new perspective on Aboriginal people; they're a bunch of great people to be around!

What has had an impact on me so far would be the stories, especially the Jandamarra story, I found it really interesting and inspiring. Yiramalay is definitely a worthwhile experience for deaf people to have!

CHALLENGES

FOETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER (FASD)

It has been reported that the prevalence of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder in the Fitzroy Valley is as high as one in four children and one of the world's highest recorded rates (Laurie V, 2014, p.4). This data is the outcome of a collaborative research study called the "Lililwan Project" which interviewed 127 mothers in Fitzroy Valley about their intake of alcohol during pregnancy for their children born in 2002 and 2003 (Fitzpatrick J. et al 2015)

FASD is a life time disability caused by maternal alcohol consumption in pregnancy, the consequence of which is a range of disorders – physical, learning and behavioural and social which create educational challenges (Elliott Elizabeth 2012, Guerri Consuelo).

Teachers require a high level of understanding of this disorder and an ability to be adaptable and at times very quick to respond. It is an area of continual learning for all the staff as no two students are the same. Impulsiveness, hyperactivity, limited memory retention and inability to connect actions with consequences are just some of the problems encountered. At Yiramalay using contact with animals, such as Brian, the pet Brahman bull, and horses, has been shown to have a positive impact on calming students. Students learn to understand their own actions and the effect this can have on others which assists with class room engagement and attendance.

In preparing staff for the challenges of teaching at Yiramalay, a Mental Health first aid course is provided and staff are given workshops by a recognised FASD Educator / Consultant.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF STUDENTS

The report, *Young Australians: their health and wellbeing 2011*, produced by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2011) states that: compared with their non-Indigenous counterparts, Indigenous young people are:

- Twice as likely to die from all causes, including six times as likely to die from assault and four times as likely from suicide
- Ten times as likely to have notifications for sexually transmissible infections and six times as likely for hepatitis
- Six times as likely to be teenage mothers
- Six times as likely to be in the child protection system
- Fifteen times as likely to be under juvenile justice supervision or in prison
- Twice as likely to be unemployed or on income support
- Three times as likely to live in overcrowded housing
- Three times as likely to be daily smokers

Compared to their city counterparts, young people living in remote and very remote areas:

- Have higher death rates
- Have more dental decay
- Are less likely to see a general practitioner
- Are less likely to be meeting minimum standards for reading, writing and numeracy and to be studying for a qualification
- Are more likely to be in jobless families and live in overcrowded housing

At the commencement of their education at the Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School, time is allocated to improving the health and nutrition for each new student. Problems with skin infections and other health issues are addressed often requiring trips to the hospital in Fitzroy Crossing. When the students relocate to Melbourne, eye, ear and dental screening are undertaken due to the availability and easier access.

Addressing student welfare concerns is an ongoing issue. Communicating with child protection officers, the criminal justice system and linking students with mental health service and pregnancy support services are part of the pastoral care program. There are now young mothers in our educational program and day care for their babies is organised to allow them to continue their schooling.

WESLEY COLLEGE INDUCTION STUDENTS FROM MELBOURNE

The Melbourne Year 10 students come from all three campuses; St Kilda Road, Elsternwick and Glen Waverley, and the staff represented also are from all Wesley College sites.

Each Induction program runs for three weeks. The focus of each week is as follows:

- Week 1 - Personal Development & Land, Language & Culture
- Week 2 - Personal Development & Industry Learning, Tourism & the Arts
- Week 3 - Personal Development & Industry Learning, Pastoralism

Interest in the program has grown each year. In feedback from students, the following continue to be named as highlights:

- The relationships formed (between students, with staff and with the local community)
- The personal development (seeing different ways of learning, stepping outside their comfort zones, seeing a bigger picture)
- The traditional land owners in the spectacular natural landscape
- Being welcomed into cultural traditions and practices
- Some of the challenges cited by students are:
 - The natural environment- heat, flies, spinifex grass and wild life
 - Community living
 - Being far from home with limited communication- (no mobile phone)
 - Learning to listen
 - The importance of silence
 - Understanding the language and culture

The feedback from the Melbourne parents continues to be overwhelming positive. Parents note the growth in their children, including describing them as more mature, open, giving and with a better understanding of their world. The following quote is typical of the comments received from parents:

...I wanted to share with you that on our trip home from the airport I asked [my son] what was his "takeaway" from the experience. He said "Mum I can't really put it into words but I think it will impact every decision I make moving forward.....I realize my decisions affect all those around me", pretty powerful stuff.'

DEVELOPING CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING FOR STAFF

Understanding cultural differences and where an individual starts on this journey is a major requirement for all staff. Investment in professional learning for teachers in developing cultural competence and employing the best teachers with a diversity of ages and experience and openness to learning and engaging with another culture, are all essential in a vibrant happy school.

As one senior staff member has said:

So much of what I've learnt at Yiramalay has me thinking about my teaching and students back in Melbourne. There is something about being at Yiramalay that makes it easier to find space and time to look, listen and feel..... Staff at Yiramalay have no choice but to trust and to hand some of the power back to the Indigenous students. This strategy has great power back in the classroom in Melbourne. How do I build that trust (both ways)? How do I hand the power back over? How do I create space to look, listen and feel? (Independent Schools Victoria 2012, p. 61)

At Yiramalay, currently, there are nine Aboriginal full-time mentors in the program and, when on location at Yiramalay, local Aboriginal people are employed on a casual basis for specific cultural programs in art, language, law and country. Small group sessions are also held to discuss men's business and women's business which also include health education.

Staff professional development at Yiramalay offers a number of programs. All teaching staff complete the TAFE Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. Cultural mentors undertake training at the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organization (VACCHO) building towards a Certificate III in Education support. Induction staff and other support staff are also actively encouraged to engage in practical training to assist them in their roles both in Melbourne and at Yiramalay including 4WD, First Aid, Cultural Connections and Mental Health First Aid. These sessions are run by a variety of local (Fitzroy Crossing based) and external community facilitators.

Planning is underway to improve and provide new pathways for professional learning for our Aboriginal mentors and to support this process a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has recently been signed with Charles Darwin University in Darwin the following key areas of collaboration:

- Teacher education
- Indigenous leadership training
- Teacher professional development
- Research and evaluation

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) IN THE BUSH

Information and communication technology is an integral component of education today but ICT in remote areas such as Yiramalay does not support teaching programs that are increasingly reliant upon fast and reliable internet. While recognising the remote site challenges it is important for our students at Yiramalay to have 'fit for purpose' technology access supporting their educational program.

Upgrades to existing infrastructure are being explored with the major service providers in the Kimberley though cost constraints and upload and download capacity through satellite technology and associated network connection are impeding factors. The National Broadband Network currently has no timeframe listed for service rollout to the Yiramalay area.

FUNDING

There are numerous funding challenges for the Studio School, both in the recurrent costs to support the running and development of the program and in the capital budget requirements for growth of the infrastructure at both Yiramalay and in Melbourne. The cost of running a residential school in an isolated part of Australia, particularly in relation to fuel, food, transport and technology-related services is substantial. Staffing cost reflects the need to develop talented teaching staff complemented by comprehensive Indigenous pastoral care to meet the individual needs of students.

Sustaining long term scholarship support for students is a priority. After State Government and Federal Government funding, there is a shortfall of between \$10,000 - \$15,000 per student. A \$15,000 per annum scholarship fund for students is now the target to enhance the financial sustainability and growth of the program.

Given the unique nature of the Yiramalay residential and educational program crossing two States the other key challenge constraining the programs growth includes raising capital funds to allow for infrastructure development to support the Studio School in both the north west as well as Melbourne, including increased student and staff accommodation requirements in both Melbourne and Yiramalay, new kitchen and dining facility and expanded teaching and learning facilities at Yiramalay.

Current Funding

The Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School is reliant on both State Government and Federal Government funding sustainability, along with donations and sponsorship funding from philanthropic and other organisations and individuals.

State Funding

At the Western Australia state level the Minister for Education has been very supportive from the outset in 2010 of this unique model of Studio School, and has supported the provision of the highest level of funding across the full year, including when the students are based in Melbourne.

Federal Funding

A Federal Government funding Agreement was signed in 2013, providing full funding for students, comprising Recurrent Grant funding, Remote Loading (due to the remote location of the Studio School) and Indigenous Supplementary Assistance (Private communication with Federal Government). This full funding was received for 2013 and also backdated for 2012. Limited Federal Government funding was previously provided under Special Circumstances provisions of Federal legislation largely due to early difficulties registering the Studio School within the Federal system given the uniqueness of the school extending across State borders.

The new needs-based funding model, introduced by the Abbott Federal Government in 2014, has significantly improved the amount of funding provided to the Studio School. This model includes a number of new 'loadings' on top of the base student funding (with Indigenous loadings), which are linked to the size of the school, its remote location, and its boarding facilities.

ABSTUDY Funding

This is specific funding for Indigenous students, provided under provisions of the federally-funded Centrelink program. It is a complex model, is means-tested, requires significant paperwork and is a complicated process for Indigenous families. Currently, funding is being received for about half of the students in the program reflecting the complexity of the process for Indigenous families.

Philanthropic Support / Yiramalay Foundation

Generous support has also been received from a number of donors over the last five years, both in the form of general support in addition to specific funding for student scholarships, funding for the employment of local Aboriginal staff and funding to support family travel between locations while students are away from home in the Kimberley. While individual donors from within the Wesley community and beyond are too numerous to mention the generous continuing support of philanthropic foundations / corporate sponsorship such as the Portland House Foundation, The Pratt Foundation, Kimberley Diamond Company and The Kimberley Foundation have been exceptional.

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ART PIECE

Rainbow Serpent
Kaylene Marr

Courtesy of the artist



EXPLANATION OF THE WORK

This painting of the rainbow serpent represents our land and our animals. We call him “Ungud, the Rainbow Serpent”. In Bunuba culture, we believe Ungud lives in our waterholes. He cares for us by looking after our land and giving us bush tucker. It is important to welcome new people to Bunuba Country so Ungud can take care of them.

Kaylene Marr

Bunuba woman and Traditional Owner, Yiramalay

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Kaylene Marr was born in Derby Hospital, WA in 1981. She grew up in Fitzroy Crossing and Yiramalay on Leopold Downs Station on Bunuba Country.

Kaylene’s father, Harry Marr (dec) was a Bunuba Man and her mother, Sylvia Wulmundu is a Nyikina Woman.

Mother to three children (Lochlyn, 5; Adah, 8; and Lionel, 14), Kaylene works at Yiramalay / Wesley Studio School as a cultural mentor, and lives and works with the students in both Melbourne and Yiramalay.

Kaylene’s connection to the land inspires her artwork and she has been an artist since she was a small child.

ABOUT THE COVER

Majority Rule
Michael Cook

*Courtesy of the artist
and Andrew Baker
Art Dealer, Brisbane*



Michael Cook is an award-winning photographer who worked commercially both in Australia and overseas for twenty-five years. In 2009, Cook was drawn into art photography by an increasingly urgent desire to learn about his Indigenous ancestry and explore that aspect of his identity. Cook's first solo art exhibition, *Through My Eyes* (2010), contained images of Australian prime ministers overlaid with the faces of Australian Indigenous. This work explored the potential interconnectedness of generations of Australians and its importance was recognised with selection for the Western Australian Indigenous Art Awards 2011 at the Art Gallery of Western Australia.

Cook was adopted and brought up in a family who, while not of Indigenous descent, were heavily involved in supporting Indigenous rights. He said, "I was raised with a strong understanding of my Aboriginal ancestry thanks to my parents... When I produce art, I feel a stronger connection with my ancestry. This helps me to understand Australian history-in particular, my history." His Aboriginal heritage informs and extends his art.

Cook's photographic practice is unusual. He constructs his images in a manner more akin to painting than the traditional photographic studio or documentary model. Instead he begins with an idea, regarding the image as his blank canvas. Photographic layering is then used to build the image to provide aesthetic depth. Also, he characteristically works in photographic series. Unfolding tableaux offer enigmatic narratives which are not prescribed but left open to interpretation.

In 2011 he exhibited two new series, *Broken Dreams* and *Undiscovered*, together under the title of *Uninhabited*. Their importance was acknowledged when they were acquired by the National Gallery of Australia and shown in its *UnDisclosed: 2nd National Indigenous Art Triennial*. They show Cook's developing artistic vision in their exploration of incidents from Australian colonial history, both real

and imagined. Visually striking, technically complex and with sensitive invention, Cook's images occupy a new space in the Australian artistic imagination.

His series *Civilised* (2012) was selected to promote The 7th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT7) at Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art in 2012, and was included in the ground-breaking *My Country: I Still Call Australia Home: Contemporary Art from Black Australia* (QAGoMA, 2013). Cook's latest body of work, *Majority Rule* (2013), has been selected for inclusion in the international 19th Biennale of Sydney: *You Imagine What You Desire*.

Extract from: Martin-Chew, Louise, *Michael Cook* [ex. cat.], Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane, 2013

MAJORITY RULE- DESCRIPTION

Majority Rule is marked by its aesthetic departure from Michael Cook's previous work. While thematic and conceptual connections with some of his earlier series are evident, the setting of this suite is in contrast to the Australian land- and beach-scapes of earlier images.

This is a depiction of the urbane within the urban. Colonial buildings, the style of solid sandstone architecture which may be seen in almost any city in the Western world, paved streets and a city skyline are the backdrop for a black man, dressed in a suit, carrying a briefcase like the archetypal businessman. His figure, in different attitudes, populates the footpath. He is multiplied (in some scenes up to twenty times), a pointer to the unreality of the scene.

Currently, Australia's Indigenous are a small minority, comprising only three to four percent of the total Australian population. Consequently, black faces have little visibility in Australian capital cities and this series of images defies that reality—yet acknowledges it simultaneously with the use of only one model multiple times to build the crowd because, Cook noted, “The reality is it is hard to find models who look characteristically Indigenous. ‘Indigenous’ is many things and physical characteristics have little to do with this identification. So while looking Indigenous has nothing to do with Indigeneity, in my aesthetic I seek out a strong character in a model's physicality.”

The multiple versions of the subject populate generic city locations: a subway tunnel, an old-style bus, and city streets. Old Parliament House and Canberra's High Court are more iconic buildings, and take Cook's protagonist to the seat of Australian political power. As such, Cook's imagery challenges our ingrained belief systems, yet these images do not offer judgement—they are observational, asking questions, setting up lively interactions within their scenes, without proffering neat nor prescriptive conclusions.

Cook noted, “I was never taught Aboriginal history at school, only about the European settlement of Australia. What I learnt in school was similar to the first European settlers' beliefs, with words like ‘natives’ and ‘discovery of Australia’. Looking back now, I realise that it was a false way of teaching, and that it hid the truth about the treatment of Aborigines over the past four hundred years.”

The colour of the man's skin is the disjunction that prompts the viewer to wonder, and then wonder at their own wonder. It becomes a gauge for internalised racism. Australian audiences may ponder why this collection of well-dressed black men in a city street strikes a discordant note, an atmospheric that feels wrong, unusual, discomfiting. The era of the photograph is undefined but feels vintage, retro, with its black and white tonality speaking to our protagonist's clothing—the lapels of his jacket, the flare in his pin-striped trousers, the sober hat, the dark braces over his white shirt and the stately dignity of his bearing, all of which suggest a period up to fifty years ago. Yet there are other references to iconic Western culture—the bowler hat in *Majority Rules (Memorial)* revisits the shape of the anti-hero in the anarchic 1971 Stanley Kubrick film, *A Clockwork Orange*, or a silent Charlie Chaplin-style comedic figure.

In *Majority Rule* Cook poses an insoluble dilemma as he acknowledges the discriminatory nature of society. How it would be if these statistics were reversed? After the explorers arrived in Australia, the Indigenous population was decimated. This was, in part, because Aboriginal people were without immunity to introduced diseases. “The majority always has the rule and the minority doesn't. Then there is racism that arises as a result.”

There is a formality in these works, with strong architectural lines and perspective to a distant vanishing point. *Majority Rule (Bridge)* is suggestive of Raphael's *School of Athens* (Raphael Sanzio, 1509-11). The synergistic connections between variations on the individual, the vanishing points created with the straight lines of the street, footpath pavers and the collection of rectangular assemblages of city buildings and windows provide a stage-like setting for Cook's individuals. The figures standing in the street appear as if alone, and lacking a social or familial relationship to each other in their physical attitudes, yet are visually bound together. Cook may be positing the kind of anomie or normlessness that isolates individuals within community—the type of First World dysfunction that regularly fills the columns of Australian newspapers.

Another image from the series, *Majority Rule (Tunnel)*, records Cook's model in multiple attitudes, standing, static again, in a public transport space generally characterised by rushing—of people and of the wind that echoes through these underground spaces as trains arrive and leave. Individuals are frozen within their tightly composed cocoon of concrete and tiles. This conformity—of dress, behaviour and social norms—is another theme in this series, particularly evident in *Majority Rule (Memorial)*.

Most Western cities have war memorials and in a particularly poignant image, the black businessman ascends and descends the sandstone steps that surround a rotunda-style war memorial in a city centre. The war memorial is sacrosanct returned servicemen's territory. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have been involved in fighting for Australia in all wars since the Boer War in 1901 but, while they were paid equally for their work in the armed forces and fought alongside white Australians, on their return home they were subject to the same discrimination they faced before serving their country. Following World War II, only on Anzac Day were they welcomed into returned services league clubs. On other days of the year, Aboriginals might meet their white comrades for a drink but had to stay outside

the building or on the verandah. (It is interesting to note that the right to vote on a country-wide basis was not granted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders until 1967.)

Cook's images populate the war memorial with the black faces that have been unacknowledged in Australia's military history. The memorial itself speaks to other colonial buildings in the central business district, its roundness inspired by Grecian classic revival buildings, and Cook's figures occupy the steps, moving up one side and down the other, so as to surround and possess the rotunda.

Cook's use of the bespectacled figure in *Majority Rule* (Parliament) evokes the precedent and dignity of Australia's first Indigenous Member of Parliament, Senator Neville Bonner. In *Majority Rule* (Bus), a figure at the front reads a vintage magazine titled *WALKABOUT*, noting and satirising the stereotypes that have driven popular expectations.

There is a lean aesthetic and increased contemporary edge in this series. Cook's interest in the impact of Australia's history on its original inhabitants comes into sharp focus, and the highly choreographed images are witty, stylish and slick.

LOUISE MARTIN-CHEW, FEBRUARY 2014