

Gamilaaraay/Yuwaalaraay/Yuwaalayaay Language and Culture Nest August 23 meeting notes

Meeting opened at: 11:05am

Welcome to Country

Auntie Brenda McBride gave a Welcome to Country and a minute of silence was held in remembrance.

Introductions: Those who were in attendance briefly introduced themselves.

An apology was received via email from the Dhariwaa Elders Group.

Gamilaaraay/Yuwaalaraay/Yuwaalayaay Language and Culture Nest Open Group Discussion

An open group discussion began and was facilitated by Shayne Williams. The following discussion points were made:

Discussion Points: There is a need for clarity around staffing and funding of the Language and Culture Nest

- There is a need for clarity on staffing positions available so positions can be filled e.g tutor hours, roles, how many tutors, coordinator etc., governance and leadership across the Nests (DAA, Department of Edu, AECG, TAFE)
- There is little clarity and transparency on available funding for the Nest - We need to know what the Nest is, where we are going and where we need to go...
- Public Schools in Goodooga, Lightning Ridge, Collarenebri, and Walgett are a part of the Gamilaaraay/Yuwaalayaay/Yuwaalaraay Nest.
- Employed in the Nest right now there is 1 teacher, there were tutors but they have left their jobs – there may be funding for the coordinator position sitting in the base school - need to pin down and find out where that funding is, what funds are available now
- There are no tutors in the Nest but we have two Aboriginal teachers who can support language program development and implementation
- Recently the Department of Education signed a contract with NSW AECG - this contract is to support the development of additional resources needed for the Nests to progress
- Schools involved in the Nest get a base allocation funding for 3 hours per week for Tutors - after that schools are to use their own budget – schools outside the nest are to use their own global budget for Language teaching and learning.
- Communities and schools across the Nest are different, for example the language program being implemented in Goodooga may not fit a larger high school – each place

has different hurdles/obstacles for example an unsupportive Principal or no staff so there is a need for more strategic planning

- In Goodooga for example – I've been working on the language program and with others but we don't have many in the community who speak fluently and I have many teaching commitments – so if we get tutor on to work that three hours per week to work with me to help develop resources and to come into classes as well, and if community is happy with that, is that feasible? I think the Department is pretty flexible – if Goodooga is happy to go ahead then there are resources to go ahead with that – then if people want their formal training then there are also resources there to do that - It should be up to each community re what they want to do with their language and culture
- 3 hours for a tutor may be fine in Goodooga but when you go to bigger schools it is hard to see how three hours a week is going to be enough for those schools
- In some areas there are full time language tutors – the school pays for their whole wage and then gets reimbursed by Department for the three hours of Nest funding.
- What are the qualifications needed for a language tutor Gamilaaraay Cert I, II, III? Not always – if community recognise Elders as having the knowledge, the Department of Education is not going to tell them to do their Cert I, II etc. but the Department does have a pay scale which identifies those certificates for pay rates...this should have been explained previously but we are now capturing this in our Department guidelines.
- Bottom line is we need a local tutor in our communities to support and teach languages.

Discussion Points: Sustainability

- At the moment the language teacher is doing both teacher and coordinator jobs...One person can only do so much
- Getting tutors is a priority - we have lost our two tutors because of issues regarding transport – travelling around the country at their own expense is not working out as a sustainable option – a better approach may be to have locally employed tutors working in their local schools
- A need for someone to coordinate meetings to share teaching and learning resources across the nest was expressed
- There is a need for a Project Officer or Coordinator to come on board and working autonomously ie outside a school or Department of Education
- At the moment we have 5 in this Nest doing their TAFE Cert IIs - There is a need to train tutors up and get them into schools almost straight away before the nest goes – along with this there is a need for more TAFE teachers to teach language as currently there is only one person doing Gamilaaraay at TAFE in Dubbo – there are a few people within the Nest who may be able to teach Cert I, II, III
- Have we got future funding for the language Nests? There is a commitment to end of 2017 – It's up to Nests to get it right to build a case so extended funding can be granted
- It is a priority to get someone on board to support coordination of Nest work asap

Language and Culture Nest Governance

- We need a Reference Group which has representation from all Nest communities and the AECG
- There is a need for someone to support the Reference Group re minutes, correspondence and communications
- The Department of Education's Aboriginal Education and Community Engagement (AECE) currently monitors the Nests – recently the Department of Education and NSW AECG have formed a State Level Language and Culture Nest Steering Committee – The Steering Committee includes members with strong supportive relationships at senior levels for example with Directors Of Public Schools and their Exec Directors
- The Language Nest Teacher reports each month to Raymond Ingrey in Department of Education with Nest related data around language teaching, learning, resources and professional development within the Nest
- One aspect of the NSW AECG's role in the Nests, as defined in the recent agreement/contract with the Department of Education is to support building of community governance and ownership - This is where we need community to make up the Reference Group to identify what is needed + work with schools, then Department can support things to happen after that
- Local Nest Governance/Reference Group can work to communicate to Department and NSW AECG priorities and issues within the Nest that are not able to be worked out at a local level
- There is a draft terms of reference, which can be provided to the Nest Reference Group when it is formed
- Members of the Reference Group along with the Language and Culture Coordinator/Project Officer and Local AECGs would have responsibility to spread important language and culture nest information across their relevant communities
- The Department and the Language and Culture Teacher have a responsibility to inform school Principals regarding the Reference group and its work - it could also be the Director of Public School who hears this from the Chair of the Ref Group and they could then filter it down through schools.

Devaluing Language and Culture within schools

- We have had language tutors working out of the back of car boots as schools weren't giving space in the school for tutors to work in
- Aboriginal Language is often not appreciated or given the support it requires in the same way as foreign languages are in schools - We hear it all the time that Aboriginal teachers are dropping out because they are unable to be allowed to teach their language and culture - We are trying to build our profile re teaching Aboriginal languages but at same time we have to compete with other LOTE teachers like Japanese and French..
- There was a lot of discussion around Principals who were not committed to or supportive of implementing an effective Aboriginal language program – for example at a

Local AECG one Principal said “there’s no one in this region qualified to teach Aboriginal language” ... it’s a gubbah’s way of seeing things, so what about an old 90 year old fella who’s been speaking lingo, just because he hasn’t been to uni doesn’t mean he’s not qualified – they’re lifting the glass ceiling re qualifications, next thing they’ll say is “you’ll need a degree and then a Masters”.

Consistency in approach and pronunciation

- People pronounce words very differently – who is right and who is wrong with this? There’s a Gamilaaraay dictionary but our language was always learnt orally so pronunciation off the written text is not always going to be correct – this issue is affecting the legitimacy of the teaching and learning process, for example at one school stage 1,2, and 3 students are being taught pronunciation by one teacher and secondary stage 4,5,6 students are taught by a different teacher who teaches different pronunciations for certain words
- The problems with different dialects and pronunciations become a major issue, particularly in a large place like Moree where you can talk with five different people and get five different pronunciations

Language and Culture Training and Development Opportunities

- We need professional development for Aboriginal language teaching just as Department of Education teachers get relevant PD – there’s a need for paying respect to building this agenda/our professional development needs around teaching language and culture
- A need was expressed for increasing communications about training and development opportunities like TAFE offering Cert I and II
- For those who can’t travel to Dubbo and prefer to learn language informally, there’s a need to build on informal language learning programs - There’s a program in the Barriekneal Centre which needs to be established/re-established
- It may be useful to run afternoon TAFE cert I, II and III courses in Lightning Ridge, or wherever else might be needed, people interested in running these courses would need to complete a training and assessor certificate with TAFE

Additional Points to Consider

- Some schools here aren’t in the nest - Moree and other communities can also form their advisory bodies so they are ready to roll if the nest grows.
- Need to start language programs in the pre-schools with community members working in there.
- NSW AECG has recently provided training to all Directors of Public Schools and a lot of them now appear keen to put in place/support the development and implementation of Language and Culture programs in NSW Schools