

Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest – July 28 meeting notes

Welcome to Country

Meeting opened at 10:08am. Uncle Gary Williams Welcomed people to Country in Gumbaynggirr Language.

Acknowledgements/Introductions

Michael Jarrett acknowledged Country, Elders and those who were in attendance and asked participants to also briefly introduce themselves.

NSW AECG – NSW Department of Education Language and Culture Nest Project Overview

Raymond Ingrey provided a background to the development of Language Nests in NSW. He also provided an overview of the Language and Culture Nest project the NSW AECG has been recently contracted to undertake by the NSW Department of Education.

Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest Update

Michael Jarrett provided a background and update of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest. Michael explained his role as Gumbaynggirr language and culture teacher included identifying, supporting and team teaching with people who know language. He also noted that his role was to develop resources and to work towards making sure language is consistent across the Gumbaynggirr tutors and to reduce misguided use of language. Michael noted that he is not always perfect in language but he gets advised by Muurrbay. He advised that we should utilise Muurrbaay as much as possible.

He noted that 32 schools were targeted for Gumbaynggirr programs in 2014 and that now, out of those, 29 have programs in them. He also noted that there are currently 9 language tutors employed in Gumbaynggirr Country. Michael also highlighted that TAFE institutions are delivering Gumbaynggirr programs in Grafton, Coffs Harbour and Macksville. Michael reported that there are also community based Gumbaynggirr programs being implemented in Bellingen and that Clarke Webb was implementing community based and preschool programs in Garlambirla/Coffs Harbour. There are approximately six pre-schools on Gumbaynggirr Country that are delivering language programs.

Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest Open Group Discussion

After Michael's update an open group discussion began and was facilitated by Shayne Williams. The following discussion points were made:

Discussion: There is a priority for Gumbaynggirr teachers and tutors to continue to learn language and to increase development of language teaching and learning resources

- At some schools tutors and teachers are only able to manage teaching language across one stage of learning (ie Stage 1)
- Language learning needs to happen across the different stages of learning in schools so that Gumbaynggirr language does not become a thing of the past for children who learnt language in preschool and stage 1
- There is an urgent need for increased implementation of and teacher/tutor participation in language training programs
- Teachers and tutors are also learning the language - It is hard when you are a language learner to also have good confidence in teaching at the same time - Teachers and Tutors are doing their language training in their own time outside of school hours
- Teachers and Tutors employed by the Department of Education, particularly those working full time, are not getting professional development release time to go to Muurrbay or TAFE or even to local AECG meetings
- Allocated professional development hours/funds are being eaten into by 'mandatory whole of school' professional development
- Language belongs to the community not the school therefore teachers and tutors need to be amongst the community for development, not always in the school
- Teachers and Tutors are also not getting the time to spend together to develop teaching and learning resources
- There are plans being arranged to get tutors to meet once a month to develop resources
- Muurrbay can deliver programs for teachers and tutors to achieve Cert III. They could run their program at night however this would take teachers and tutors approximately two years to complete – one day a week (four hours) or a block release could be options to speed the training up – Muurrbay could effectively deliver this if teachers and tutors can get released and a coordinated approach is developed
- Muurrbay can also deliver informal language programs to community members who do not feel a formal cert I, II or III suits their language learning needs.
- Government expresses commitment to Aboriginal languages but does little to facilitate this. The NSW AECG could take the issue of increasing opportunities for tutors' and teachers' language learning/professional development to the Department of Education
- Conversations could be had with Directors of Public Schools in Gumbaynggirr Country so they can work with Principals to improve opportunities for teachers and tutors to get relevant professional development with Muurrbay
- RAM funding is associated with professional development opportunities so we will need to act quickly to organise increased training and development opportunities for 2017
- Teaching Gumbaynggirr to students in Stage 1 is a priority at the moment however you can deliver stage one to anyone who hasn't learnt language before.

Discussion: Language and Culture Nest Coordinator/Advisor + Reference Group

- The Department of Education has only finalised the Language and Culture Nest contract with the NSW AECG during the last 2 months
- The Department of Education need to be advised by community on how best to respond as it is not the Department's role to determine how to progress the Language and Culture Nest - This advice could be organised through community developing a Language and Culture Reference Group and the coordinator could support the administration of the Gumbaynggirr reference group.
- A reference group should involve key stakeholders and support the development of priorities for increasing Gumbaynggirr language teaching and learning
- The current teachers and tutors don't have the capacity to be coordinating the work that needs to be done, there is a risk of burnout
- Community has been told that there would be a Language and Culture Nest Coordinator role yet there has yet to be one advertised
- There has been different definitions presented - In the past it has been a Language and Culture Nest Coordinator – now it is a Language and Culture Advisor but it would seem that an 'Advisor' is not what is necessary – a Project Officer role would be more suited to what is needed
- There is a need for a project person to work to organise: Gumbaynggirr language reference group meetings: the coordination of tutor and teacher cert III language learning program: the coordination of a Gumbaynggirr teacher/tutor teaching and learning resource development program. This position needs to be put in place asap.
- The NSW AECG will investigate the process of employing a Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Project Officer after considering local needs and context
- In regards to the reference group it is important for it to get started asap so it would be a good idea to develop an interim reference group

Discussion: Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest Sustainability

- Funding associated with the Ochre Strategy and the Language and Culture Nests was provided on a five year government commitment to 2018
- The separate project funding provided through the Department of Education to the NSW AECG to support the Language and Culture Nests is based on a contract which will be finalised at the end of 2017
- Sustainability of the Gumbaynggirr Project Officer position needs to be considered
- Pulling the plug on funding and providing only short term funding for Aboriginal education has been a real and very common problem in the past – there is a need for a long term commitment from government and schools to support the language nests
- If we show the government that we are making progress re training and developing resources etc. then government can see this is working and continue supporting us

- we need to be pushing the teacher/tutor training right now - we need Gumbaynggirr to be heard and spoken more often and then in the long term to become a more mainstream rather than token subject in our schools
- Also need to ensure that TAFE language courses remain available
- There has been significant work that has been done re curriculum scope and sequence and units of work from Stage 1 to Stage 6 - it is important to advocate on behalf of the mob to Department re the importance of continued support of the language nests

Discussion: Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest Strengths

When asked about the strengths of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nests participants made the following points:

- Language learning and the development of resources around this is bringing the Gumbaynggirr community together
- There have been increases in relearning of language across Gumbaynggirr country
- Aboriginal students are clearly becoming very involved in their Gumbaynggirr lessons – they ask more questions and generally show high levels of participation in their learning
- Aboriginal students show a real sense of pride in their Gumbaynggirr classes - when you do language, they often know some of it already and they spark and lighten up when they hear it in the classroom
- There is real passion and growing confidence within the tutors as they learn language
- There are now additional language learning resources in classroom
- Many non-Aboriginal people are also getting involved in Gumbaynggirr language learning and this is big for building mutual understandings

Additional discussion points to consider

- A long term goal could be for Language courses to be offered as prof devp to adults who work in the public sector and other institutions working within Gumbaynggirr Country
- It might be important to provide professional development for language teachers and tutors to better make use of information technology to develop and implement language learning programs
- Need to consider developing language learning programs/content that is not solely based on traditional stories but also language stories about the community and environment that kids are growing up in today - we can source these stories from our Elders – there's a need for funding to consistently support this sort of curriculum development - Muurrbay currently does some of this sort of work
- There's a need for parents and grandparents to learn language as well as the children - Programs for them should be considered and implemented
- There may need to be language hubs for people to access to reduce issues associated with distances and travel time.
- There may be a need to develop a wage structure around tutors who have cert I, II or III

Meeting Close: 12:30pm