

NW Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest – August 8 meeting notes

Welcome to Country

Meeting opened at 11:18am. Aunty Di McNaboe sung and Welcomed people to Country in Wiradjuri Language.

Acknowledgements/Introductions

Aunty Di McNaboe acknowledged Country, Elders and those who were in attendance. Participants also introduced themselves.

NW Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest Open Group Discussion

After introductions an open group discussion on the North West Wiradjuri Language Nest began. The following discussion points were made:

Discussion: Progress and positive signs associated with NW Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest

- Tutors and teachers highlighted positive impacts teaching and learning Wiradjuri has on student participation and engagement in school and on building pride and connection with their Wiradjuri identity:
 - Seeing the students smiling when they are learning language – if we cant make it for a lesson they are asking where we are
 - It's amazing to hear students use the Wiradjuri word muddyi (friend) in the playground
 - Students asking where are we when we miss lesson
 - It is exciting when walking through Dubbo shops and you hear a child speaking some language - we are also now seeing Wiradjuri spoken on social media - seeing the language building makes us proud, its blowing people away
 - We can see and feel the language is giving a sense of identity back – who we are where we've come from – it helps in recognising the old people that came before us were very knowledgeable people
- The development and implementation of Wiradjuri programs has increased – there are now over 2000 students in nest area learning Wiradjuri.
- Language learning/training is also building tutor's self-esteem and identity – it is healing to be a part of the process to ensure that the next generations don't say 'I don't know my language, I don't know my culture'
- Increasing the learning of language and culture provides more opportunity to become aware of and reduce issues that cause conflicts in the Aboriginal community i.e. the reality is many people have not had the opportunity to learn or speak language growing up under racist Government policy, and therefore don't know where they are from - this causes identity conflicts and issues in community – now we see increases in students

researching their own lineage rather than simply identifying as Wiradjuri because they live here - Elders and their knowledge of kinship structure can provide good support in this process

- AEOs and Tutors have been released by schools to attend 2 day workshops for teaching training, language learning and resource development at the end of each term – this is lifting the skills of everyone and includes achieving their cert II and III in Wiradjuri
- TAFE/Yarradamarra Centre and school staff involved in teaching and learning Wiradjuri have formed a strong family like supportive team - Aunty Di has been instrumental in progressing the Language and Culture Nest through writing programs, her good rapport with some Principals before the Nest started, and her support for tutors and teachers through pulling language and cultural resources together to match the Key Learning Areas.
- There are also many staff and community members who are giving additional time and in kind support to build Wiradjuri language and culture teaching and learning – though staff burnout was raised as an issue
- Wiradjuri language teaching and learning programs are breaking down barriers between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people

Discussion: Barriers to progressing the NW Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest

- Some schools are not accommodating of the Wiradjuri and Government's Language and Culture Nest objectives, for example:
 - Meeting attendees noted that some schools need to implement training around appropriate language and protocols for working with Aboriginal communities - Aboriginal staff are sometimes dumbfounded with inappropriate and racist language being used both in the staffroom and when school staff and Principals work with the Aboriginal community
 - Under local schools local decisions community members are not being included in decision making when they should be
 - Meeting attendees noted the comparatively high rates of suspensions of Aboriginal students in the region, which included suspensions of kindergarten students – attendees suggested there would be less suspensions if language/cultural identity affirming programs were more prevalent in schools
 - Some schools are not releasing AEOs for language training and resource development
 - Tutors, AEOs and teachers are being trained to teach language but often are assumed and relied upon to be the expert in all things Aboriginal
- the above issues are making Aboriginal community members feel less confident to go into schools - as a result some are running language programs outside the schools
- It was identified that at the state policy level there is a strong call for schools to implement Aboriginal language and culture programs however at the school principal level you can get individuals isolating Aboriginal communities – taking Aboriginal

communities out of the process of implementing and participating in cultural programs and student support re-engagement programs

- It was also stated that in schools where principals are dictating terms which are clearly counterproductive to achieving the Wiradjuri and Government's Language and Culture Nest objectives, the region's Director of Public schools should be approached and the State AECG should respond
- Some community members devalue language and culture programs - some support and/or inform Principals with the argument that literacy and numeracy skills is what is needed and that language and culture programs are unnecessary
- In many schools there are a range of programs for Aboriginal students – this can complicate things when, for example kids are being referred to programs like Clontarf, NASCA or brospeak or ICAN during times when they could be doing language classes are being held – additionally some of these programs provide only 'stereotypical' sporting opportunities and leave girls out entirely which makes for more complications
- There needs to be a promotion of how our programs such as Connecting to Country and the Language and Culture Nests can and do cover all of the Key Learning Areas in the education system – School Principals and others are commonly not seeing or respecting this value within our programs

Discussion: Sustainability of the NW Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest

- The overall goal is to make language and culture mandatory rather than just an afterthought in schools and TAFE curricula
- Currently there are approximately 17 schools implementing Wiradjuri programs in the NW Wiradjuri Nest
- At the moment Aunty Di has 3 tutors - there is a need for more tutors as some have taken up roles at TAFE to work on language programs there – Some tutors are covering large distances travelling 130-140kms
- Regarding long term should schools, rather than the base school be funding their tutors themselves - Schools outside the nest are using their global budgets to implement language and culture programs
- TAFE language courses are building up – there is currently over 260 students doing Wiradjuri + Gamilaraay/Yuwaalayaay/Yuwaalaraay
- Currently funding for the NW Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest does not go beyond 2017 – there is a need to show a strong Nest foundation to Government to make the argument for funding beyond 2017 – if funding does not continue there will be a need for the Department of Education to work with communities to ensure language and culture programs continue to build
- Addressing the lack of respect some people have for Wiradjuri Language and Culture programs will help increase the sustainability of the Nest

- Schools are already planning their budgets for next year – language and culture programs and budgeting needs to be promoted asap rather than in January or February when the planning has already happened.

Discussion: Wiradjuri Governance and Protocols for the NW Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest

- Getting appropriate permissions for developing resources including online resources needs to be upheld
- Ensuring protocols are followed around ‘who can teach’ Wiradjuri is also important
- What would community governance of the Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest look like? Two people from each nest community have signed off on the Nest – there is no need to reinvent the wheel, those two people could be contacted to form a reference group and for those who aren’t able to be involved they could nominate someone from their community who can
- Could look at nominating a man and woman from each of the Nest communities to form the reference group
- The reference group could act to: advocate to individual schools struggling; set the role description and decide who might be appropriate for additional Nest staffing position; feedback and update community on Nest activities and progress

Discussion: Staffing to support NW Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest

- The coordinator position has been talked about for years – we need a support staff/coordinator yesterday
- This staffer could: support Aunty Di in developing programs across all educational stages; develop submissions for attracting funding to build/further progress the Nest; continue researching the language through AIATSIS etc.; administrative, communication and project work associated with the reference group
- The reference group could further advise on staffing needs after its first meeting
- To avoid too much delays in putting additional staff member on it might be more useful to move to put someone on in the interim asap

Additional points to consider

- The educational support officer at TAFE is doing good work with Elders in developing language resources and also teaching language
- Tutor training TAFE cert I, II and III’s could be provided by TAFE Western for Gamilaaraay/Yuwaalaraay/Yuwaalayaay and Paakantji Language and Culture Nests
- The moodle that is up and running now is useful for people to learn language while they are off Country
- Teaching through Wiradjuri culture/song/story/dance/artifacts etc. is an important and strong teaching method
- There is a need for gathering data – we don’t have the data on how many children, adults and non-Aboriginal people are learning language

- There is legislation which restricts the Department providing data due to potential for identification – Raymond Ingrey will confirm what the Department can share
- We would like a Language Centre here in Dubbo, like the ones on the NSW coast
- Aboriginal kids who go to private schools are missing out on language – the Department only provides resources to public schools, however in some locations private and catholic schools are running language programs

Meeting Closed at 1:42pm

DRAFT