

PROJECT REPORT

2013 Aboriginal Artists in Blue Mountains Schools (AABMS)

Overview

This is the third year of the project. **315** Blue Mountains students in **13** schools participated workshops with Aboriginal artists. This year the focus was on ' ' and how it impacted on local Aboriginal people, groups and culture while also relating it to the *NSW Reconciliation Council Schools Challenge* theme of **"Say Something"** (See Appendix 1 for school by school workshop experiences)



The project welcomed participating schools;

Blackheath Public, Ellison Public, Hazelbrook Public, Katoomba North Public, Lawson Public, Leura Public, Mt Riverview Public, Mt Victoria Public, Wentworth Falls Public, Katoomba High, Springwood High, Winmalee High and Korowal.

"The 'Say Something' workshop was the most fun workshop I've ever had and I hope that we might do it again at our school" William Todman - Mt Riverview student

Of the 13 schools that had workshops, 7 chose to enter the NSW Reconciliation Challenge with many artworks submitted from each school. Most schools also expressed an interest in having their students' work submitted to the **Cultural Sharing exhibition on September 14th & 15th in Lawson.**

The project was auspiced by Mountains Outreach Community Services (MOCS) and lead by Anne Fitzgerald (Community Development worker with MOCS). Anne worked with the community and schools to develop the AABMS program and take on recommendations from previous year's participants.

This year the program was able to employ local artist Leanne Tobin as the Aboriginal Project teacher/co-ordinator, a role that has created a more fluid development of the workshops and their implementation processes. Leanne was an integral link, connecting cultural awareness to school curricula through her experience as a trained teacher. Leanne worked with MOCS and the TAFE student support team to create tools for the artists and teachers to use before and during the workshops. This included a power point presentation and criteria based learning sheets for stage 3 and stages 4 and 5.

Feedback shows that teachers in particular thought this was an effective way for them to bring up the subject of reconciliation with the children prior to workshops.

The project was also guided by Darug & Gundungurra Elder Aunty Carol Cooper who gave her support to the workshops by working alongside Anne, Leanne, the Aboriginal Artists and gave guidance to the TAFE student team. She also took this opportunity to 'Say Something' and shared her stories at some of the workshops that she attended for which we are all appreciative.

What does reconciliation mean?" Aunty Carol put up her hand and stated simply
"You and me = us. We need to work together"

The support team facilitated workshops by six well respected Aboriginal artists; Leanne Tobin, Dianne Ussher, Jacinta Tobin, Teekee Marloo, Chris Tobin and Graham Davis King. Each artist shared local traditions, history, art and their own work to inspire the students to think, share and ask questions so as to gain insight into local Aboriginal history, culture, and connection to place.

The Community Services section of Blue Mountains College of TAFE supported the project again this year through Community Services Teacher Kay Bazley and her team of Certificate IV Students all of whom appreciated the opportunity to assist and share in the workshops; Alina Ginn, Dayle Starcevic, Ernest Maloinato, Janet Farrell and Kit O'Meara. The support team also included members of the Blue Mountains People for Reconciliation.

The highlight for me was when one school student sang; 'Heads, shoulders, knees and toes' in Darug while Aunty Carol sang and joined in with actions, followed by another student singing a line of the national anthem in Darug to which the whole group applauded.

Janet Farrell (TAFE Student) at Wentworth Falls Public School workshop

Project Aims

- To strengthen existing links, while building new ones, for reconciliation and understanding within the Blue Mountains community, its Aboriginal groups and local schools.
- To build momentum around the reconciliation message in schools and in the local community.
- To strengthen existing links, while building new ones, between local Aboriginal Elders, Aboriginal artists and Blue Mountains schools.
- To encourage Blue Mountains schools to have their students create artwork to enter in the NSW Reconciliation Council Schools Challenge and the Local Cultural Sharing exhibition.
- To educate the students about the impact of _____ of Wentworth, Blaxland and Lawson and the following settlement on Aboriginal culture and way of life.
- To inspire the school students to creatively express their learning through artwork.

Highlights and Outcomes

The creation of teacher's aids for the workshops such as the power point (see attachment) and curriculum based outcome sheets (see also attached) aided the programs substantial growth, and increased understanding within the schools of what this program is striving to achieve.

This is the direct result of making connections within the schools themselves with the true driving force behind education- the teachers and principals. With the support of individuals such as Owen Dalkeith (Katoomba North Public) the merit and benefits of the program became clearer to the schools. Schools began to see the ways in which the workshops could be linked to the curriculum.

"The school is not producing a set piece of art but is using the workshop as a stepping board to open discussions in all subjects, music, creative writing, art..."

Korowal Teacher - Cathy Veel

All participating schools reported that the project was positive for school students and staff, promoting an increased understanding of local Aboriginal culture, of place, and symbolism in indigenous art. All reported that the Aboriginal Artist Workshops were engaging and enjoyable, and many reported significant impact for students, teachers, and families and, in some cases, the school.



Teachers reported that the workshops enabled the school to explore with children and staff their understanding of reconciliation, Aboriginal culture, respect, multiculturalism and a sense of belonging. An increased number of reports were received of interactions between children and their families about their artwork. Aboriginal children were reported to benefit greatly from the experience.

Variation in the approach and talents of local Aboriginal artists is a major strength of the project. Many returning schools enjoyed the diverse nature of the workshops and put in requests for specific artists/workshop styles.

“We had to create a painting representing the theme ‘Reconciliation and the Crossing of the Mountains’. We worked right through recess... Our pictures had to have a meaning and we had to explain what our pictures meant. It was a fun and creative day”

Jessie Mitchell - Mt Riverview student

Project Co-coordinator’s report- Anne Fitzgerald (MOCS)

2013 saw the integration of the Education Department with the project as this had been seen as essential if we were to sustain and ideally mainstream the project. To do that we required a teacher to come on board and feedback from previous years made it clear that an Aboriginal Co-coordinator was needed.

We (then) formulated that these two needs could come together in the appointment of Leanne Tobin as the Teacher/Aboriginal Project Co-coordinator. Leanne developed the curriculum integration document to support the project (see attached). This was an essential step in enabling schools to integrate the project into their school curriculum.

This year the Education Department provided \$8000 which covered virtually all costs associated with the workshops. This announcement came late in the day after Owen Dalkeith (Principal of Katoomba North) had secured pledges of funding from a number of schools. This money was subsequently returned to the schools, and more schools were now able to participate in the project.

The future of the project depends upon commitment of Education Department funds early in the last term of 2013. Only then can the specialist personnel be secured such as the Aboriginal Consultant and Aboriginal Teacher Coordinator. This lead time is also needed to accommodate volunteer TAFE and MOCS personnel required, and give more notice to the schools that want to participate in the project.

The timing of the exhibition in September rather than April as in previous years will enable this cultural sharing to grow as a Blue Mountains event and takes the pressure off coordination of the workshops.

The project is bigger than it's been with thirteen schools and an additional three Aboriginal artists have come on board. Once again we have been extremely fortunate having a dedicated, skilled team supporting the project.

This is the first year we have developed a teaching kit and power point presentation (see attached) for schools so that they were able to conduct pre-workshop activities with students to prepare them for the workshops. Schools were also encouraged to have post workshop activities to complete student artworks and deepen students' learning of Aboriginal culture and reconciliation.

Most of the schools involved are already working intensively on Aboriginal cultural themes. This project is an important initiative that adds to or inspires that work. The September exhibition will hopefully showcase what schools are doing beyond the Aboriginal artists' workshops, and is an important way of publicly sharing what is happening in Blue Mountains schools.



" ... the reasons for this (the workshop) is to unite us all ... no matter what our blood is."

Dianne Ussher Aboriginal artist Mt Victoria Workshop

Leanne Tobin - Aboriginal Project teacher/co-ordinator report

The project this year explored the theme 'Crossing the Great Divide' and focussed on working in with the bicentenary of the journey of three English men, Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson through the lands of the Darug, Gundungurra and the Waradjuri people with the aim of investigating and relating the unheard perspectives of the people who watched the passing of the English men.

The Aboriginal artists encouraged students to look through Aboriginal eyes at this event and how the crossing impacted on the lives of their ancestors with wide spread ramifications for Aboriginal people today.

Through storytelling, music and art making, the Blue Mountains Aboriginal Arts Project became a perfect conduit for introducing the wider community to local Aboriginal culture and history. It encouraged them to listen to the stories of the Aboriginal Artists and share the rich heritage of their culture and life experiences. Each artist brought with them their own knowledge and art practice, sharing their own perspectives of the impact the crossing had on their ancestors; the original custodians of the land.



Aunty Carol Cooper

The involvement of the TAFE students and MOCS staff was crucial to the success of the project as their input and attention to detail was invaluable, enabling the workshops to flow easily and unimpeded. The project brought an awareness of the need to work towards healing; building mutual respect and understanding whilst acknowledging the past and its continuing impact.

Immediate feedback after each workshop from teachers, students and artists was enthusiastic and the positive outcomes saw the production of incredibly insightful and empathetic work. The inclusion of actual curriculum outcomes as outlined in the NSW Department of Education curricula for stages 2-5 along with the DVD resource the schools received, was particularly welcomed by the schools as it provided opportunities for students to be prepared with ideas and information before the commencement of the workshops and later became a resource the schools could use after the workshops.

The project was definitely a worthwhile and valuable experience for all involved and it is hoped that it will continue to grow in the future, working in partnership and enriching the experiences of all those involved while bringing more local perspectives and stories of 'place' to light.

The developments to the program have enabled it to meet more curriculum requirements such as – Creative and visual arts, HSIE, CAPA, English (literacy), Aboriginal history and perspectives.

Consensus from teacher and principal feedback forms - 2013

LEANNE TOBIN
PROJECT COORDINATOR

Funding

In the past few years it has been a struggle to get funding for this project to run. In 2011 it was granted \$3000 by the NSW Reconciliation Council. In 2012 the Blue Mountains Aboriginal Culture and Resource Centre (ACRC) was able to support the workshops with \$2000, while MOCS funded the Cultural Sharing exhibition.

This established the need for a funding strategy at the start of this year which was two pronged: to get support through Sponsors (community leaders) and through 'Friends of' the local community service networks. The aim was to raise \$2000 to run and develop the program striving to receive \$1000 from each source – 'matching dollar for dollar'.

We are very pleased to announce that after formulating this funding drive the NSW Education Department saw the benefits in our program and its capacity to fit within the curriculum. By contributing \$8000 they have funded the program within schools for this year and allowed its expansion into the broader community through Cultural Sharing events planned for September.

For this project to achieve its aims, this funding needs to be obtained on a recurring basis.

2013 Project Challenges

The tight project timeframe had been the most pressing problem for the AABMS project when attempting to support and promote the NSW Reconciliation Councils Schools Challenge.

Despite embracing the recommendations of the 2012 evaluation – to commence school liaison in term 4 for the 2013 project – planning problems continued in 2013, predominantly due to schools willingness to commit to workshop dates and times. The fact that the project is now developed and based around school curriculum requirements should hopefully encourage earlier uptake of workshops.

The busy nature of first term and the time frame allowed by the Schools Reconciliation Challenge deadline still caused some issues though it was made much easier by the fact that the Cultural Sharing exhibition part of the AABMS has been moved to September, after the NSW Exhibition. It was also beneficial that not all schools wanted to contribute to the NSW Exhibition and were able to wait until after the Easter holidays to have their workshops.

The TAFE students, who assisted in the preparation for the workshops, worked on and implemented a funding strategy; managed by MOCS; though found that the fact the program receiving government funding drove everyone's focus into the development of the workshops.

Feedback from teachers and principals stated more pre-workshop contact; less complicated paperwork systems and fixing the version control issues for the power point were the main areas for concern and these will continue to be addressed by the project in the future. Though positively feel the AABMS is and authentic and effective way of promoting and raising awareness of reconciliation.

Going Forward



The benefits of having an Aboriginal Project teacher/co-ordinator in Leanne Tobin were immense as she worked with Anne Fitzgerald (MOCS), the schools and the artists to create an achievable workshop program that resulted in successful workshops, well informed artists and community development team.

By continuing to work with TAFE students, artists and Elders in developing this program the aim is to continue to reflect the needs of the community as a whole. While giving local Indigenous persons and groups in the Blue Mountains the opportunity to express the impacts of and continued settlement on themselves and their ancestors.



The theme was extremely relevant with the Bicentenary being commemorated throughout the Mountains and predominately showing the perspective of the explorers.

By developing this concept over the next three years and continuing to share through art, the project aims to create a truer understanding and increase reconciliation opportunities into the future. This is shown again through the introduction of a Cultural Sharing Event planned for June this year with the hope for more to follow in the years to come.

An exhibition of school student's artwork

'Cultural Sharing Exhibition'

Lawson Public School Hall

14th and 15th September 2013

PLEASE JOIN US!



Appendices

Appendix 1 : Workshops school by school

Mount Riverview Public School Leanne Tobin



Leanne has vast experience working with large groups of students and keeping them engaged. She used the power point as she explained the crossing and how it affected the Darug and Gundungurra people of this area and their neighbouring clan groups who also crossed the mountains. Some of her work was shown and she explained how she created them and the techniques she used. She ensured the students had an hour and a half to do the artwork as they were entering the NSW Reconciliation Challenge. Throughout the workshop she continued to demonstrate techniques and give ideas but the biggest gift was the freedom she inspired in the students to give things a try as you can always just cover it up and try again. The students were also reminded to name their work and think about their artists statements which inspired them create some

very thoughtful artworks which truly did try to 'Say Something' about what they had learnt. The school had pre workshop visits from Aboriginal families within the school where they spoke to the students and shared their stories and history. This created a personal connection for the students and gave them a truer understanding of an indigenous perspective which enabled them to create artworks that showed the depth of their learning.

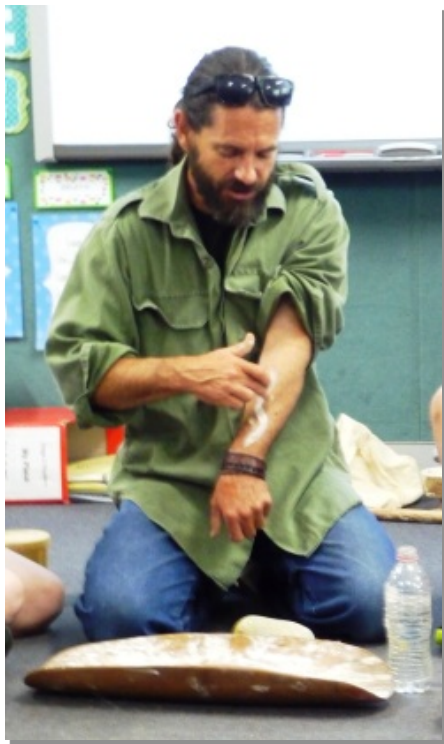
Katoomba North & Mount Victoria Public Schools & Springwood High School Dianne Ussher



Katoomba North was the first of our workshops and everyone was very excited Leanne, Aunty Carol and Anne all attended. Leanne began the workshop by going through the power point and discussing the crossing, the impact it had on local indigenous communities and the stories behind the artwork she and other artists had allowed to be shown within it. At Mt Victoria Public school Diane did this after reading Aunty Carol's personal account of her own story which included her experiences as a young girl and the impact of settlement on her family over the generations. A very moving moment for all present especially the students as she spoke of her experiences when she was their age and attending school. The students at all the workshops then began their artworks as they were entering the NSW Reconciliation Challenge. Aunty Carol and the TAFE students walked around assisting students where possible but it was Diane that you could see the children asking for advice on technique, symbols and ideas on how to put their thoughts on paper. At Springwood High the excitement & work produced surprised the students themselves especially one girl who ran into the hall to grab a friend to show her the artwork

she had created.

Winmalee High School & Ellison Public School
Chris Tobin

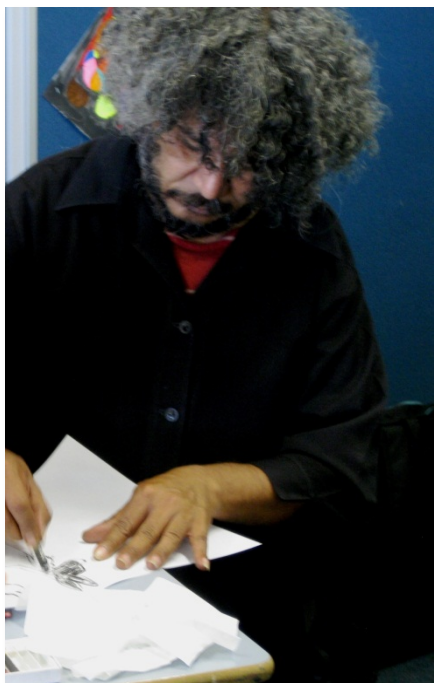


Chris spoke about the local environment, how it was used and shared by the local Aboriginal groups before the explorers came to the mountains. He spoke about how precious the waterways are and how they connected yet defined all the Aboriginal clan groups in the Sydney and Blue Mountains Region. He also mentioned that the uses for the water must be kept separate and respect for traditions needed to be upheld. He spoke about the communication and sharing that could be involved with art and how you can make a statement without damaging the environment, by using natural ochre paints that wear away with time.

He described some symbols and what they represented before taking the students out to the playground where, even though it was raining periodically, he taught the students to crush and make ochre paints. Chris spoke about the ancestors and the reasons they think of trees as spiritual as he painted a spirit family on the tree with the ochre. He left some for the students to use and create their own artwork at Winmalee High though

Ellison Public had better weather and the students broke into groups and painted trees with different coloured ochre paints they had made together before hand. They also painted each other.

Katoomba High School & Hazelbrook Public School
Graham Davis King



Graham shared his thoughts with the students about having the opportunity to 'Say Something' and what it meant for them now and in the future. He used music and his gift for storytelling to share how the crossing impacted his ancestors, how they were already using the land and how the Wiradjuri people believed that a rainbow serpent made the hills and the valleys that surrounded us. Other stories about the 7 brothers and sisters and the Emu in the stars inspired many of the artworks especially at Katoomba High where they used charcoals and worked in groups to create some dramatic artworks that changed and grew as they discussed what they wanted to say.

He also talked about totems and what they meant culturally for connection to country, place and people using the story of how the kangaroo got its pouch to try to help express these connections and how they are put into practice.

**Lawson and Leura Public School
Teekee Marloo**



Teekee arrived at the workshop to find the table's set up, paints and papers set out by Aunty Carol and the TAFE students.

Teekee started by talking about and the impacts it had on the local tribes in and surrounding the Blue Mountains. She showed and discussed with the students some women's tools and furs, asking them to guess how they were used or worn then giving them the chance to come and touch the objects.

After going through some symbols that are used in local artworks and their meanings she crushed up some ochre and offered staff and

students the opportunity to have their faces painted. The students began their artworks while Teekee, TAFE Students and Aunty Carol walked around complimenting and assisting students as they were reminded that this is their opportunity to 'Say Something'. They certainly did 'Say Something' with their artworks about the crossing and how it impacted the local Indigenous people.

**Korowal School & Wentworth Falls and Blackheath Public Schools
Jacinta Tobin**



At Korowal there were approximately one hundred students, Jacinta used her gift for music and language to engage us all. She welcomed us all to country and began with a song in the Darug language. She got the kids involved by asking them to think of words/place names that might have an indigenous history such as Parramatta meaning eels and Bullaburra meaning two hills.

At all of her workshops she shared some beliefs and traditions within her culture and sang songs she had written like Yarramundi which had Darug words that went with actions, to which all the students got up and sang and did together. Faster and faster until everyone was smiling and laughing with each other as they could go no faster.

While at Wentworth Falls and Blackheath Public schools they created artworks while keeping in mind and their ability to 'Say Something' as well as sharing with Jacinta her music, language and stories.

Stage 2 - Outcomes incorporated in this project

Change and Continuity

CCS2.1

Describes events and actions related to the British colonisation of Australia and assesses changes and consequences.

CCS2.2

Explains changes in the community and family life and evaluates the effects of these on different individuals, groups and environments.

Cultures

Cultural Diversity CUS2.4

Describes different viewpoints, ways of living, languages and belief systems in a variety of communities.

Identities CUS2.3

-Explains how shared customs, practices, symbols, languages and traditions in communities contribute to Australian and community identities.

Environments

ENS2.5

-describes places in the local area and other parts of Australia and explains their significance.

Relationships with Places ENS2.5

- describes how people can construct and modify environments in a manner that reflects ideas, culture, needs and wants
- recognises that Aboriginal nations and boundaries provide a way of understanding the Australian continent

ENS2.6

- describes people's interactions with environments and identifies responsible ways of interacting with environments.
- identifies issues about the care of places in the community or places of importance to them
- evaluates the necessity of caring for and conserving a feature, site or place
- identifies the consequences of using features, sites and places in different ways.

Stage 3 - Outcomes Overview of Outcomes incorporated in this project

Change and Continuity

CCS3.1

- Explains the significance of particular people, places, groups, actions and events in the past in developing Australian identities and heritage.

Cultures

Identities CUS3.3

- Describes different cultural influences and their contribution to Australian identities.

Cultural Diversity CUS3.4

- Examines how cultures change through interactions with other cultures and the environment.

Environments

Patterns of Place and Location ENS3.5

-Demonstrates an understanding of the interconnectedness between Australia and global environments and how individuals and groups can act in an ecologically responsible manner.

Relationships with Places ENS3.6

-Explains how various beliefs and practices influence the ways in which people interact with, change and value their environment.

ENS3.6

-Explains how various beliefs and practices influence the ways in which people interact with, change and value their environment.

-evaluates alternative views about the use of the natural and built environments

- examines how natural, cultural, religious, historical, economic and political factors can influence people's interactions with environments

- identifies the different viewpoints of groups and individuals, including Aboriginal people, farmers and miners, about uses of land

-expresses a personal point of view on an environmental issue and provides supporting evidence.

Stage 4

Objectives	Outcomes
Students will develop:	A student:
a knowledge and understanding of the nature of history, past societies and periods and their legacy	4.1 describes and explains the nature of history, the main features of past societies and periods and their legacy
a knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and indigenous peoples of the world and the nature of contact history	4.2 describes significant features of Aboriginal and indigenous cultures, prior to colonisation 4.3 explains the ways indigenous and non-indigenous peoples of the world have responded to contact with each other

Objectives	Outcomes
Students will develop:	A student:
the skills to undertake the process of historical inquiry	4.4 identifies major periods of historical time and sequences people and events within specific periods of time 4.5 identifies the meaning, purpose and context of historical sources 4.7 identifies different contexts, perspectives and interpretations of the past

Stage 5

Objectives	Outcomes
Students will develop:	A student:
a knowledge and understanding of significant developments in Australia's social, political and cultural history	5.1 explains social, political and cultural developments and events and evaluates their impact on Australian life
a knowledge and understanding of the changing rights and freedoms of Aboriginal peoples and other groups in Australia	5.3 explains the changing rights and freedoms of Aboriginal peoples and other groups in Australia
the skills to undertake the process of historical inquiry	5.4 sequences major historical events to show an understanding of continuity, change and causation 5.5 identifies, comprehends and evaluates historical sources 5.7 explains different contexts, perspectives and interpretations of the past

Objective Students will:	Area of Content	Stage 4 Outcomes A student:	Stage 5 Outcomes A student:
develop knowledge, understanding and skills to make artworks informed by their understanding of practice, the conceptual framework and the frames	Practice	4.1 uses a range of strategies to explore different artmaking conventions and procedures to make artworks	5.1 develops range and autonomy in selecting and applying visual arts conventions and procedures to make artworks
	Conceptual framework	4.2 explores the function of and relationships between artist – artwork – world – audience	5.2 makes artworks informed by their understanding of the function of and relationships between artist – artwork – world – audience
	Representation	4.4 recognises and uses aspects of the world as a source of ideas, concepts and subject matter in the visual arts	5.4 investigates the world as a source of ideas, concepts and subject matter in the visual arts
	Conceptual strength and meaning	4.5 investigates ways to develop meaning in their artworks	5.5 makes informed choices to develop and extend concepts and different meanings in their artworks