

SNAICC NEWS

SNAICC NATIONAL CONFERENCE



**Largest ever national
conference on, for and
with Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander children
and families**

Powerful, exciting – it inspired me

July 2010: Nearly 1000 delegates shared three days of friendship, thinking, inspiration and learning. The energy and heart of the people of Central Australia pulsed like the rhythms of the *Drum Atweme* drummers. The wonderful weather, the mountain ranges, green spinifex, the light – it all reflected the spirit of the gathering: An affirmation of commitment to the children, the culture, the land and the work.

There were inspiring keynote speakers and displays by children, youth, men and women, with a kaleidoscope of films, song, weaving, dance, art, over 40 workshops on child rights, child protection,

community based programs, autism, early childhood education, and so much more. There were outside session meetings between peak advocacy groups, a film night at Larapinta Valley, an evening at the Akeyulerre Healing Centre, a conference dinner for 850 delegates doing their own wok cooking, an art competition, and a great art market.

SNAICC Conference Working Group Convenor Lisa Coulson said: 'It was so powerful and exciting. It has given me the confidence to talk up more about things we are already doing and for the right way to work, or what may not be working. It all inspired me and I felt so proud to be part of SNAICC.'



Alice Springs children put on beautiful displays throughout the conference: *Top:* Gillen Primary School choir. *Mid left:* the Drum Atweme drummers *Mid right:* attentive audience *Bottom* Keynote Cindy Blackstock (First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada)

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Left: Ian Sweeney, SNAICC conference coordinator and Sharyn Low (Specialised Conference Project Management Service for Child & Family Services.)



Centre: Sabella and Janet Turner gave the welcome to country, along with Karen Liddle and the Irrelape-Lyape Dance Group



Right: SNAICC Executive member Desley Thompson thanks Lisa Coulson (Tasmanian Aboriginal Child Care Assn) for her tireless work steering the SNAICC Conference Working Group.

Alice Springs 2010 – thanks for coming

‘After a year of working on the conference’ said Ian Sweeney, SNAICC conference organiser, ‘there’s just the report to write up now. It’s been quite a ride! We had initially expected 500 people and have had to increase it to 950 people and knock back many more. This threw up a whole different set of logistics.’

‘This big response to the conference built on the reputation of our 2007 Adelaide conference’ said Ian Sweeney. ‘It turned into a bigger event, but the great venue really helped keep it friendly and personal. We wanted to make it a celebration for all of the workers with our children and young people, because it can be a tough field. My hope was for us to facilitate good sessions, make a space for all the good conversations between the sessions and showcase the whole feeling of the Centre and the local services. And indeed there were over 370 delegates from the NT.’

‘The conference has involved so many people – the SNAICC Executive the local services, over 150 presenters and all the SNAICC staff. My special thanks go to Sharyn Low and Associates, who dealt with all the hard behind-the-scenes work with such expertise. Special thanks also to Lisa Coulson, our SNAICC Conference Working Group Convenor who was so efficient, calm and committed.’

‘Thanks also to SNAICC EO Frank Hytten and SNAICC Resources and Training Manager Catriona Elek for their support; to Tangentyere Council Yarrenyty Arltere Learning Centre Larapinta Valley Town Camp; to Akeyulerre, the Arrernte Healing Centre; and to Roy Price from Ethical Nutrition Bush Wok Dinners for taking on over 850 wok cooking diners in the Todd River (with help from Kungas Can Cook and Alice Party Hire.)’

SNAICC is proud to acknowledge our sponsors: the NT Government, the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, the NSW Department of Human Services Aboriginal Affairs NSW, the NSW Department of Education and Training, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Victoria, the Department of Education and Children’s Services SA, the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, World Vision Australia, Life Without Barriers, the National Indigenous Times, Warlpiri Education and Training Trust, Scene Change and Relationships Australia

Conference keynote speeches are online and the conference report will be available late October. Photos by Wayne Quilliam and SNAICC staff.

SNAICC Exec at conference



L–R: Back: Lisa Coulson (TACCA), Leona Smith (Kuarna Plains MACS), Emma Bamblett (VACCA), Donna Klein-Kawane (CQAICCA – former Exec member), Dawn Wallam (Yorganop), Steve Larkins (Hunter Aboriginal Children’s Service), Sharron Williams (AFSS); L–R: Front: Cindy Blackstock (Guest – First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada), Desley Thompson (RAATSICC), Dianne Harvey (QATSICPP). Other SNAICC Exec at conference were: Roslynn Webb (Noogaleek MACS), Roderick Wright (CQAICCA), Alison Wunungmurra (RRACSSU), Dot Bagshaw (Gurlongga

Get ready for Cairns 2013

‘... and the next SNAICC national conference is to be held in Cairns in 2013,’ announced Lisa Coulson, SNAICC Conference Working Group convenor.

In her conference closing address, Lisa presented the future Cairns conference host, Desley Thompson, with clapsticks made at the conference celebration at Akeyulerre, the Arrernte Healing Centre. The powerful, clear rhythm of the Alice Springs conference was passed on to the care of the Cape York/Gulf Remote Area Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Care Advisory Association (RAATSICC) for the Fifth National SNAICC Conference.

The Cairns SNAICC Executive member Desley Thompson said: ‘Being around so many people in Alice was so powerful. It has uplifted me, motivated me. Feeling that spirit, seeing Countrymen, seeing all the kids performing... it was the right place to be. I was really proud to be part of SNAICC for those three days. It felt like a big family gathering, then preparing to leave everyone, and then be told “We are coming to your place next in Cairns” and be presented with the clapsticks! I got a bit emotional... all the family is coming to my place next!’



Arrernte Elder Irene Davis led the clapstick making at Akeyulerre and made this set to carry onwards to Cairns!

Federal election 2010 – for our children

SNAICC met with all major parties in the lead up to the 2010 federal election, lobbying on behalf of our children and families. SNAICC proposed nine election priorities. These election priorities are comprehensive, modestly costed and are a tiny proportion of the national budget. SNAICC thinks the 250,000 Aboriginal children deserve better.

Steve Larkins, SNAICC Chairperson said: 'SNAICC has been very encouraged by the unity of all parties in committing to constitutional recognition for our peoples and to the National Indigenous Congress.

These are hard won gains made over 40 years since the 1967 referendum that delivered us basic human rights. SNAICC urges all politicians to look further for common ground in those other basic human rights such as education, housing and health.

'SNAICC applauds the ALP Government for their investment in Aboriginal affairs since coming to office in 2007 and for their willingness to make generational commitments beyond the usual three year term. Their 2010 policy re-commits them to Close the Gap and further tackles family violence and alcohol

abuse – both key elements in our children entering the child protection system. However, SNAICC is disappointed the

opportunity has not been taken by either federal party to do more to build on the achievements of the past three years. We would like a stronger commitment to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in implementing the National Indigenous Reform Agenda.'



SNAICC Chairperson Steve Larkins

SNAICC's 9 federal election priorities

1. National partnerships framework project

Develop a national resource outlining principles, protocols and good practice profiles for partnerships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities and mainstream organisations and governments. This resource will be grounded in the principle of Aboriginal community-control and aid in developing robust and respectful partnership arrangements. \$300,000 over two years

2. Expand and support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Care Agencies

Establish two new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled child and family welfare services in the Northern Territory to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Care Agency (AICCA) functions, including supporting the out-of-home care placement of children.

Expand existing Family Support Funding for all AICCAs and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family welfare services. \$16 million over three years for new Northern Territory services; \$50 million over three years to expand the Family Support Program

3. Develop training on the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle

Develop a resource and training program to promote consistent awareness, understanding and implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle. \$350,000 over 2 years

4. Rebuild and restore the 33 Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS)

Rebuild and restore operation of the Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS) through a one-off capital upgrade, a 30% increase in recurrent

funding to meet the projected costs of new standards and for recurrent funding to be indexed annually. \$1 million upgrade for each of the 33 MACS

5. Support the roll-out of the 35 Children and Family Centres

Establish a SNAICC Project Officer role dedicated to supporting the roll-out of the 35 Children and Family Centres, including provision of information and support, liaison between stakeholders; and research and policy support. \$500,000 over 5 years

6. Recommit funding for the SNAICC Resource Service

Recommit funding for the resource and training needs of services working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. \$3.15m over 3 years

7. SNAICC resources training and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services

Extend the impact of SNAICC resources in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through providing training and implementation support services to, and working in partnership with, existing training organisations. \$980,000 over 3 years

8. Celebrate culture: National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day

Promote and celebrate National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day in all Australian primary schools. \$300,000 per year

9. Establish a National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner

Establish a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner. The Commissioner's role would monitor the health, wellbeing and care of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. \$16 million over 4 years.

Contact: felicity@snaicc.asn.au

Promises made

SNAICC has reviewed post 2007 significant events in the administration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs which have had ramifications for our family and children's services. This includes a useful list to monitor promises with actions. These include:

- Broader COAG National Partnerships as at April 2010
- National Partnership payments fund specific projects and facilitate or reward States that deliver on nationally significant reforms
- National Partnerships that have been agreed to date
- Federal Election 2010 policy announcements by key issues with links to each policy announcement.

Download: www.snaicc.asn.au/policy

Contact: emily@snaicc.asn.au

Budget-based funding

SNAICC News had hoped to include in this issue an article from DEEWR about new budget based funding allocations of \$59.4 M for the 142 budget-based early childhood services across Australia. Unfortunately this issue has been produced whilst the government is in post-federal election caretaker mode and DEEWR cannot forward the material.

SNAICC understands that this budget based funding roll-out will be needs based, not application-based, and will be rolled out over four years, starting with a focus on currently unlicensed centres or those unlikely to meet requirements. There will also be a workforce component developed in the coming months. DEEWR tells SNAICC they will send us the information to put online as soon as possible.



Gerib Sik
dance group

NAICD Cairns launch

The breakfast launch of the 2010 National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day (NAICD) was held in Cairns this year. The launch was hosted by Cape York/Gulf Remote Area Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Care Advisory Association (RAATSICC). Over 35 local service representatives from the area came along to celebrate the NAICD theme – *Value My Culture, Value Me*.

Event host, Desley Thompson, SNAICC National Secretary and RAATSICC Director of Services spoke about SNAICC's *8 Priorities*. Desley said, 'SNAICC thinks all Australian governments should adopt our eight policy priorities, each of equal importance, to improve the health, welfare and education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.'

'Late last year, I presented these *8 Priorities* to our Governor General, Quentin Bryce. We also sent a framed copy to Jenny Macklin, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. I hope they read them and have taken notice. I'll be asking them next time we meet! Two of these *8 Priorities* form the foundation for the theme: *Thrive by five with culture alive* and *Value and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture*.

Cultural identity and connection to family, community and country are the birth right of every child and it's what our children need to prosper – in the early years and beyond. No governments should ever have to say 'sorry' again'.

Queensland federal Labor Senator Jan McLucas spoke at the event about her experience as a primary school teacher. She said, 'Children can be among the most vulnerable members of our society. Too many have their vulnerability betrayed. That's why we are the first Australian Government to provide Commonwealth leadership in child protection. And it's why we are working hard to close the gap in life expectancy, education and health for Indigenous people, especially children, through unprecedented action and investment.' She mentioned the \$4M funding for the Reach Foundation to extend teacher training and support so that young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians can get the best start they can.

Catriona Elek from SNAICC talked about the theme *Value My Culture, Value Me*. She said, 'It's always in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's best long-term interests to foster a strong identity enriched with a sense of belonging and connection to history, culture, land, family and kin. The WA Child Health Survey, a major study of child health and wellbeing, found remote Aboriginal children have better mental health than those living in Perth – so adherence to traditional culture may be protective against emotional and behavioural difficulties.'

The national launch highlight was the Gerib Sik traditional dance group performing and explaining traditional Torres Strait Islander dances, and getting the whole group involved.



4 August – National Aboriginal & Islander Children's Day NAICD

Value My Culture, Value Me – was the theme for National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day in 2010. What a huge day it was! Every year the celebration gets bigger and brighter.

All SNAICC members and subscribers working directly with young children were mailed a resource pack of balloons, tattoos, stickers, frisbees, posters and fliers to help their celebrations. Seventy-three celebrations were registered nationally, and many more events that were not even registered. There were parties, dances, games, festivals, art competitions, feasts, story telling events, mums and bubs events, stalls, BBQs, grass roots action group discussions and general good fun times. Too many to each get a mention. There were news items, photos, radio interviews and press releases. A big day on a big theme, *Value My Culture, Value Me*.

Unpacking the theme

Value My Culture, Value Me – when children know their culture is valued, they know they are valued. This will grow their sense of self worth and help achieve social justice.

Value My Culture, Value Me – past practices of forcibly removing Aboriginal children and relocating Aboriginal communities continue to impact on our families. It is in the best interests of our children to foster strong identity enriched with connection to history, culture & family.

Value My Culture, Value Me – a pathway to understanding that will benefit all Australians.

Value My Culture, Value Me – finding new ways of responding to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and community.

Contact: nina@snaicc.asn.au



Playful Beginnings cupcakes (icing sugar creator is Luke Olsen (Bakery Sugarcraft Retail)).



4 August – National Aboriginal & Islander Children’s Day NAICD

The first of many reports back to SNAICC about their NAICD celebrations came from **Playful Beginnings (Liverpool, NSW)**, where local Elders, families and community joined together for lunch, traditional Aboriginal dancing and a special performance from the Torres Strait Islander dance group Urban Zenadth Kes.

Photos: Anneliese Joy (Bunganditj nation), Lakarri Thomas (Gundungurra nation) and Tanzia Dargan (GUM nation) with Educator Michelle Jacquelin-Furr (Bunganditj nation) all delighted by the cupcake icing! Chetachi Nwaogazi dances with TSI dance group Urban Zenadth Kes.

National Aboriginal & Islander Children’s Day – the 73 registered events were at:

Mawarnkarra Health Services Roebourne WA
 Centrecare Djooraminda Beechboro WA
 Champion Centre Seville Grove WA
 Ngaanyatjarra Lands School - Blackstone Blackstone WA
 ABC Eltham Centre Eltham VIC
 Australian Institute of Family Studies Melbourne VIC
 Batman Park Kindergarten Northcote VIC
 Boroondara Kindergarten Richmond VIC
 Bubup Wilam Lalor VIC
 Complete Care for Kids Alphington VIC
 Dandenong North East Kindergarten Dandenong VIC
 Haddon Kindergarten Haddon VIC
 Hope Early Learning Centre Frankston VIC
 KCQ Child Care Shepparton VIC
 Kensington Community Children’s Coop. Kensington VIC
 Merbein Preschool Kindergarten Merbein VIC
 Monash Vale ELC Clayton VIC
 Njernda Aboriginal Corporation Echuca VIC
 One World for Children Geelong VIC
 TRY South Yarra preschool South Yarra VIC
 Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd Geelong VIC
 Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress Tasmania - Leprena Glenorchy TAS
 Early Years Parenting Centre Port Augusta SA
 Learning Together Yorke & Mid North Port Pirie SA
 Port Augusta Children’s Centre Playgroup Port Augusta SA

Rostrevor College Woodforde SA
 Unity College Murray Bridge SA
 ABC Bowen Bowen QLD
 Atkinson District Joey Scout Camp Lockyer Valley QLD
 Campbell Page Community Services & Suncoast
 Christian College Sunshine coast QLD
 Children and Youth Mental Health Service Spring Hill QLD
 Cooktown District Community Centre Cooktown QLD
 Elouera Family Day Care Pomona QLD
 Everton Park Child Care and Development Centre Everton Park QLD
 Girudala Community Co-op Society Ltd Bowen QLD
 Kummara Association Inc. & Brisbane City Council @ Koobara Kindy & Koolyangarra Early Learning Centre (West End) Brisbane QLD
 Lakes Creek State School Rockhampton QLD
 Lourdes Hill College Hawthorne QLD
 Lynny’s Rare Bears, Denise’s Daycare, Patrina’s Family Daycare QLD
 Salvation Army: Communities for Children Slacks Creek QLD
 South East Primary HealthCare Network Logan Central QLD
 Stradbroke Early Learning Centre Dunwich QLD
 Wuchopperen Health Service Cairns QLD
 Mamaruni School Minjilang Community, Croker Island NT
 Milingimbi Community East Arnhem Shire NT
 The Northern Territory Stolen Generations Compensation

and Reparation Action Group (CRAG) NT
 Utju community MacDonnell Shire NT
 Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service Glenroy NSW
 Association of Children Welfare Agencies Conference 2010 Sydney NSW
 Canley Vale Childcare Centre NSW
 Childrens Haven Child Care Centres Taree NSW
 Connect Child and Family Services Inc Hazelbrook NSW
 Kooloora Community Centre Malabar NSW
 Michael Burns Children’s Centre Kincumber NSW
 Nambucca Valley Family Day Care Nambucca Heads NSW
 Narrandera School’s Community Centre in Partnership with the Aboriginal Mother’s & Babies Program Narrandera NSW
 Ngunya Jarjum Aboriginal Child & Family Network Lismore NSW
 Ngunya Jarjum Aboriginal Child and Family Network Casino NSW
 Northern Rivers Family Day Care Tweed Heads NSW
 Playful Beginnings Liverpool NSW
 Save the Children Riverina Murray Lavington NSW
 Wollongong TAFE Children’s Centre Wollongong NSW
 Birrigai at Tidbinbilla Visitor Centre Tharwa ACT



Above: tattoos from the SNAICC NAICD kit.

Photos: NAICD celebrations with the **Communities for Children Family Support Program of Slacks Creek (Logan QLD)** on behalf of Uncle Barry Watson.

Left: The turtle from the native Australian animal display.

Far left page 4 Honey Dance (the dancers are trees)



Dhandray Hagen, Swayne Farquarson, Rikara King, Kaylana Hagen of Larapinta Valley



Larapinta Valley film night a big delight

We thank everyone for the many submissions to the SNAICC Conference film program. Over the three days, and during one lunch time session and at the big Tuesday night screening as well as the music and language clips played during breaks, we screened films from as wide a cross section of country.

Some of the films screened were shorts and music from the big hART production Ngapartji Ngapartji (SA), four digital stories from Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) digital story telling projects, the Wilkannia school doco from the Wakakirri Outback Festival collection, Woorabinda music video/Woorabinda Digital Project, three shorts from Aurukun by Community Prophets Pty Ltd/The CrocFestival Foundation and Island music, from the Aboriginal Elders Council of Tasmania.

The Tuesday night film at the Yarrenyty Arterre Learning Centre featured Apmere Ayeye: town camp stories; films and music made by Larapinta Valley town camp community in Alice Springs. The event was attended by many community members and opened by Daniel Forester (Larapinta Valley Town Camp President) after delicious

food was served by Kungkas Can Cook.

Also attending were our key note speaker Cindy Blackstock from the Gitksan Nation in Canada and Andrée Cazabon; renowned Canadian film maker who has through her films championed First Nations children. Andrée said she was 'reminded once again of why she entered the film making business' as digital stories made by and with young people and communities can be 'an act of change in themselves' not just moving people to change.

In a conference setting that can be dominated by words and intellectual speak, motion picture helps us to see and understand our young people's lives and community life intimately. It was delightful to have the children who were the stars and makers of the films, playing amongst the audience and joyfully interacting with the films.

The short film program at the 2007 Adelaide SNAICC Conference was also well received and we hope this digital story tradition will continue into the next conference. Thanks to Jason Fitzgerald from Scene Change for creating the make shift projection room in the kids playhouse – we apologise to the kids for taking it over that night!

Contact: tatiana@snaicc.asn.au



Larapinta Valley community leaders welcomed film night visitors L-R: George Close, Daniel Forrester, Alistair Splinter



Canadian film maker Andrée Cazabon with Kaylana Hagen and Rikara King

Great film clips

Great music clips, Pitjantjatjara language lessons and films from Ngapartji Ngapartji started each conference day.

The Big hART Ngapartji Ngapartji project that ran in Central Australia from 2005–2010. Big hART arts mentors and producers worked with the Pitjantjatjara community in Alice Springs, Docker River and the APY Lands, and young people and their families from Alice Springs town camps (Abbott's, Karnte, Little Sisters and Larapinta Valley).

The film clips/DVD on show were just one of many great things from Ngapartji Ngapartji. Have a look at their website; www.ngapartji.org

To purchase a copy of the project's *memory basket* (containing the DVD) contact Beth Sometimes at misssometimes@gmail.com

Look out for *Namatjira*, a new Big hART project that celebrates the story of one of our most famous artists. *Namatjira* will be playing in Sydney from September see www.namatjira.bighart.org

SNAICC thanks Big hART and the crew from Ngapartji Ngapartji for their generosity in making this DVD available for the SNAICC conference.



NT Senator Trish Crossin deputised for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Minister Jenny Macklin. Senator Crossin spoke of the need to instill a thirst for knowledge in our children so they will want to go to school and supported bilingual teaching as the best way for children to learn to read and write.

Tracking SNAICC national conferences

SNAICC was formally incorporated in 1981 following the 1979 First National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Survival Conference. SNAICC has held national meetings for members & supporters most years since then as part of its AGM process. This SNAICC national conference listing does not include these annual members meetings:

- 1997 – The Second National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Survival Conference (Townsville)
- 2003 – Our Future Generations: National Indigenous Child Welfare and Development Seminar (Melbourne)
- 2007 – For Our Children; Ngadluko Ngatunnaitya Conference (Adelaide)
- 2010 – For Our Children; Ampe Anwernekenhnke Conference (Alice Springs)
- 2013 – The Fifth National SNAICC Conference – For Our Children (Cairns)



Politics behind the scenes:

Three of Australia's leading peak, national, not-for-profit organisations – SNAICC, the Child and Family Welfare Association of Australia (CAFWAA), and Families Australia – all met and presented at the SNAICC conference. They urged all political parties to inform the public in the 2010 federal election about fixing the crisis in child abuse and neglect.

The Chairs of the three organisations highlighted concerns that the rate of child abuse and neglect substantiations continues to rise nationally with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children dramatically over-represented.

The Chairs noted that while some federal government focus on the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's children* was welcome, progress has been slow to address longer-term causes and the alarming rates of child abuse and neglect. The Framework implementation funding is woefully inadequate and there is a widening gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Systemic change is needed – not the stigmatisation of individual families.

SNAICC, CAFWAA and Families Australia called on federal political parties to announce their plans to break the circuit. The organisations are also looking for the announcement of an Office for Children and Young People and a National Aboriginal Child Safety Commissioner.

Woks were burning...

What a conference dinner! Roy Price from Ethical Nutrition Bush Wok Dinners organised 850 wok cooking diners along the banks of the Todd River with help from *Kungas Can Cook* and Alice Party Hire. Truly epic!

It all worked just like clockwork, under the stars, in the balmy night air, wok cooking on the flour tin drums, alcohol free. Congratulations to all involved, including the cherry picking photographers and all 850 cooks!



SNAICC Elder Brian Butler & friends prepare their wok dish.

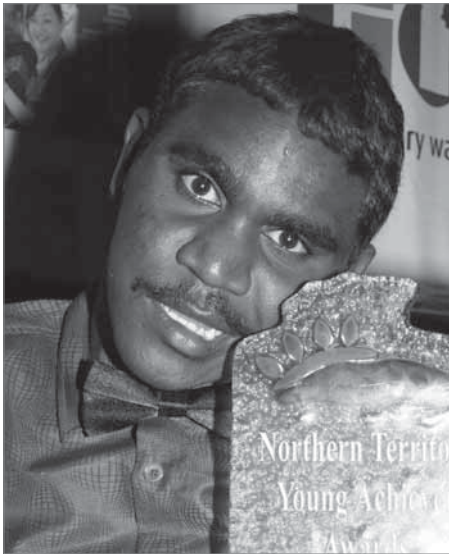
SNAICC Elder says:

SNAICC was proud to have SNAICC Elders Brian Butler, former Chair of SNAICC 1982 – 1997 and Barbara Cummings, former SNAICC rep from one of the earliest member organisations Karu Aboriginal Child Care Agency (Darwin).

Barbara Cummings was born and raised in Darwin on Larrakia country. Barbara said: 'I am simply amazed at the growth of SNAICC and the wide cross-section of participants at this conference. It's wonderful to see and I wish everyone the very best.' Barbara did the research for *Take This Child* – a crucial publication for the instigation of the civil action against the Commonwealth of Australia by members of the *Going Home Conference* in Darwin 1994.

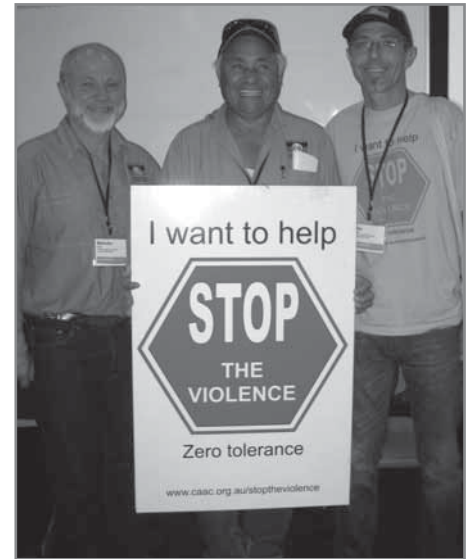


SNAICC Elder Barbara Cummings (Darwin) is now retired but still keeping her fingers on the pulse and was a panel member on the NT child protection system session.



Cheekydog

That cheeky dog spirit was alive and well at the 2010 SNAICC conference, said keynote speaker Karen Martin about the conference logo and colourful satchels. ALP Senator Trish Crossin said the logo stick figures have a special spirit, with all their little feet walking in the same direction. Thanks go to Tennant Ck. artist Dion Beasley (www.cheekydogs.com.au). Some other conference folk all pointing in that same direction are (*below top*) the Victorian VACCA/Lulla mob, (*middle*) the Queensland IPSU mob, (*bottom*) the SA friends of Brian Butler and WA Yorganop staff making some hard decisions.



Malcolm Frost, Johnny Liddle, Max Yffer of the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress male health program



'Aboriginal men, leading the way,' said Johnny Liddle, presenting the Congress dynamic, tough talking Male Health Program. They've got a drop in centre for guys (female free) with over 7000 contacts a year, 8 staff and 30 second great TV ads in 3 languages encouraging potentially violent people to seek treatment. It's about giving guys the option to do something before getting involved with the cops. The Congress T-shirts and banners read *Stop the Violence*. 'When we see something we have to act, to shout out – we have to be brave.' Congress are working on the program locally but would love to see the program grow further afield.

Contact: steve.lake@caac.org.au





Jeremy Geia of Indigenous Newslines Magazine and Radio with Malcolm Congoo of Tennant Creek.



Alison Wunungmurra, Regional and Remote Aboriginal Children and Services Support Unit NT (RRACSSU – IPSU)

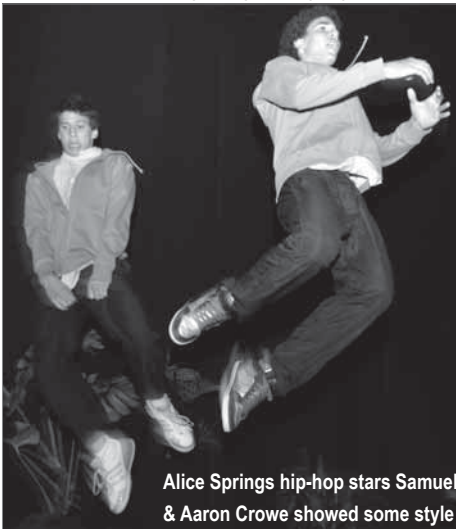
said: ‘It was really exciting and challenging, especially meeting all the other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants, with all the new ones coming in, experiencing a conference environment. Just being there, meeting people from different places, the feeling, the learning.

‘From the new people’s point of view, there were a lot of people giving that inspiration and making them strong, showing them they are not the only ones doing things. They learn the networking and collaboration, get the confidence from experiencing a big national conference. I was really happy, being in such a big room, part of that conversation, and I had my East Arnhem mob there too.’



L-R: Annunciata Pupangmirri (Jirnani Childcare), Kalina Palipuaminni, Jane Puautjimi, Augusta Punguatji (Safe House mediators)

The Tiwi Island women shared their dances at the Tiwi Island workshop on the Tiwi Let’s Start program. Sitting outside at morning tea, they told us: ‘Things are going well in Tiwi. There are two new school buildings, the new boarding school is good with a lot of students, the Well Being Centre, Jirnani Childcare, the Best Start Program for mums and bubs, there is a mobile playgroup, a building work for the dole program, the Safe House, and the police are being tough on grog.’



Alice Springs hip-hop stars Samuel & Aaron Crowe showed some style

Below & right: The very popular Tjanpi Weavers from the APY Lands ran hands on workshops and sold their wares.



Tjanpi Weavers workshop – feedback:

‘Mrs Armstrong has given me one of the greatest experiences of my life. To simply sit, watch and learn, with a few giggles was just too deadly for words.’

‘Great way to reflect on how we learn and refer to cultural learning styles.’

‘I really learned was how the Elders teach in an Aboriginal way – how watching carefully & encouragement inspires the learner.’

‘Fantastic, my favourite experience to date, would do it again in a heart beat!’

‘Excellent relaxation and therapy. Good to have a hands on workshop.

‘Ladies were wonderful. I have learnt now and will teach my children. Deadly.’





Inspiring keynote addresses (See full text online at www.snaicc.asn.au/policy/conference)



Cindy Blackstock received a standing ovation for her address, bearing witness to the Canadian First Nations' struggle for human rights. Cindy's tireless commitment, fire and generosity moved throughout the conference. Steve Larkins, SNAICC Chair, said: 'Cindy Blackstock's presentations challenged SNAICC to become more political in the arena for

Cindy Blackstock – challenging governments

national Aboriginal child welfare. SNAICC has already begun to follow that up, challenging government to make a stand on child welfare issues.'

'She was inspirational,' said Roslynn Webb of Noogaleek Children's Centre. 'We need people to with that passion and charisma, who can draw you in with their words.'

'She really ignited the fire in the belly, inspiring us not to give up' said Leona Smith of Kurna Plains Early Childhood Centre.

Cindy said that the main reason for First Nations children and families coming into contact with the child protection system is neglect, not abuse, and that neglect is the direct result of poverty, poor housing and substance abuse. She pointed to generational under-resourcing by governments as the main driver of disadvantage for First Nations people saying: 'Governments have the resources to deal with discrimination

but they have made a choice not to treat Aboriginal children with the respect and dignity they deserve.'

Cindy spoke about how Canadian First Nations are taking the historic step of holding Canada accountable before the Canadian Human Rights Commission for its current treatment of First Nations children. Their complaint alleges that the Government of Canada had a long-standing pattern of providing less government funding for child welfare services to First Nations children on reserves than is provided to non-Aboriginal children.

In addition to her keynote address, Cindy gave two inspired presentations on Mosquito Diplomacy (*see page 22 this edition*). SNAICC News August 2009 printed a speech by Cindy and is closely following the Canadian case – *I Am A Witness*.

Visit www.fnwitness.ca



Dorothy Scott – rebuts calls for removal of Aboriginal children

SNAICC was honoured for Dorothy Scott to present her last public speaking engagement as the Foundation Chair in Child Protection at the Australian Centre

for Child Protection at the University of SA. Her passionate and personal keynote speech rebutted recent media calls for Aboriginal children to be removed from their families. Dorothy Scott's inspiring full speech is on pages 12-13 in this issue.

SNAICC National Executive member, Dawn Wallam supported Dorothy Scott's statements. She said: 'I am appalled by any call for removal of all Aboriginal children from their families. This sort of preemptive child removal would create an instant and ongoing Stolen Generation into the future. It is tantamount to genocide. Properly used, the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle is the only safe option for our children. Safety for our children is paramount, and is always grounded in our culture. Even if their birth family is not a safe option, our children need to remain connected to the communities and be sure in their cultural identity.'



Karen Martin

Who's growing up whom?

Karen Martin, a Noonuccal woman from Stradbroke Island, QLD, has long worked in education and early childhood. Her presentation was about roles, relationships & relatedness in Aboriginal childhood law.

Karen said it's time to invert the cliches. She asked how do we 'see' children? She said that children should be respected when they seek to show us their power.

What does it actually mean to be an Aboriginal child? Who are your people, where are you from and how should we behave to each other. Everything is an act of relatedness and it's time for other Australians to catch up.

Karen spoke about the *Glass Slipper Syndrome* (patronising children, seeing them as less valuable than adults); the *Glass Ceiling Syndrome* (setting limits on children); and the *Glass Wall Syndrome* (staying in a safe spot when working with young children).

Karen challenged everyone working with children to see children clearly and to work with them as partners in learning.

See speech online www.snaicc.asn.au



Conference keynote speakers Dorothy Scott and Karen Martin both talked about the importance of hope. The young performer at the conference certainly showed us the power of hope. The Gillen Primary School choir sang and sang: 'The more we get together, the happier we'll be' and 'I am children of the world, I am brown, I am pink, I am beautiful I think.' Radiating joy and hope – people were in tears everywhere throughout that huge hall.

Kerrie Tim – accept the inheritance, build the legacy & pass it on Leadership & honouring the Ancestors & future generations

Kerrie is a senior government executive and a former director of the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre. Kerrie's down to Earth and personal story was an inspiring end of conference keynote speech.

Kerrie said 'My parents made a conscious decision to raise us as Aboriginal, Kalkadoon, on the lands of the Kalkadoon and the Mitakoodi. They did not make these decisions lightly. They thought through the impact of the racism that we would face, both personal and institutional and as best as they could they prepared us for dealing with it. My parents also placed Aboriginal culture at the heart of our upbringing.'

Kerrie spoke about the legacy her parents passed on; of the inheritance we receive from those who have gone before us; the conscious decision to accept that inheritance; the responsibility that then goes with building that inheritance; creating our own legacy; and taking action to pass it on to those who follow us.

In conclusion, Kerrie said: 'We have to end the hurt. We have to stop criticising

each other, no matter how ingrained the habit may have become. We have to support each other's efforts to overcome the disempowering treatment we have received. We have to encourage each other's efforts to play a full role in thought and action.

'We must listen to each other, and listen well. We must listen to each other's thoughts about what should happen. We also need times to listen to each other about the mistreatment we have received, mistreatment that has sometimes made thinking and acting difficult for us. Just doing this will make a significant difference to our ability to think and act together.

'Each of those young ones, the baby girl who is completely delighted with life and the baby girl who is despairing but looking for hope, each of them no matter their background or the circumstances into which they were born deserves to have a meaningful life – of opportunity, love, closeness. They both deserve to inherit a world with fresh air to breathe, nourishing food to eat, plenty of exercise and fun and activity to keep their minds and body active.

'It is possible for each of us in this room to join forces with everyone else we know and to build alliances with others and to contribute our thinking and efforts towards

building a society that is good for every one of us. We are capable – of being

courageous, of contributing our thoughts and understanding – of contributing our effort towards building a society that is good for every one of us.

'What was the legacy, the world view you inherited? In what way have you grown this legacy so far and what will be your next steps? What is the legacy you will pass on?

'I want to finish with the words of Robert Coles in his book, *Lives of Moral Leadership*, "We need heroes, people who can inspire us, help shape us morally, spur us on to purposeful action – and from time to time we are called on to be those heroes, leaders for others, either in a small day-to-day way, or on the world's larger stage."

'The lesson for us as we accept responsibility for the legacy we inherited, as we grow it and pass it on to those who follow, is that: **"For most young people, their heroes are their parents."** (Australian Childhood Foundation, *Every Child Needs a Hero* report).

Full speech www.snaicc.asn.au/policy/conference



Grant Sarra – men's work

Grant Sarra spoke in his key note address about the many complex challenges that men are faced with today, and the need to keep their

lore strong.

As well as the need to act with honour, dignity, and humility and show absolute

integrity as fathers and role models. The nation was challenged to know what it is really like to be black in this country.

If we value and care about the health and well being of people and culture we need to change the way that we have been going about our business – we need to move beyond ignorance, fear denial and we need to grow into our own adolescents as a nation. Grant said that while it will take

a long time to heal, we have approached a time in our country's history where we are almost mature enough to develop a formal Treaty – a Treaty based on meeting each other half way, consolidating set of universal values uniting all Australians – such as values practiced by our ancestors – caring, sharing and respect for our Land, our people and our environment.

Full speech on www.snaicc.asn.au

Bottom left: The Acacia Hill School Dancers had the audience cheering. InCite Youth Arts presented the dancers as part of the Youth Culture project (hip-hop, dance, video and aerosol art) which involves many Alice Springs groups. Acacia Hill School for students with disabilities with a mission for students to reach their fullest potential.

Bottom right: The Irrelape-Lyape Dance Group welcomed delegates to conference along with Sabella Turner, Karen Liddle and Janet Turner





Look at these pictures of Indigenous children – their beauty, joy, creativity and competence. These contrast with the fact that Indigenous children are nine times more likely to be in state care as a result of child protection proceedings than other children.

Each of these children will ask themselves the questions that all humans, ask, **Who am I? Where am I going? Do I matter?** How they answer these questions will shape how they grow up, or even whether some grow up and reach adulthood. To answer these questions, each of us needs to ask two other questions first, questions that Aboriginal people have understood for longer than any other culture on Earth. *Where do I come from? Who do I belong to?* I first came across these two questions in a SA Aboriginal organisation for people with alcohol problems. They said no one can answer *Who am I, where am I going and do I matter?* until we know where we come from and who we belong to.

In modern society we often think that answering *Who am I?* depends on what belongs to us, but the wisdom of Aboriginal people tells us that it is who we belong to which tells us who we are. It is those who love us and those we love. The answers to the questions where we come from, and who we belong to, are in our stories. We are our stories. Individuals, families and communities are created by stories, and the life of our nation is created by stories – big stories.

The little stories of each of our lives fit into the big stories of our nation. The big stories of this country go back to the Dreaming. They are Aboriginal stories up until just two centuries ago since when the stories have involved European and Aboriginal people, and their relationship. This relationship has been a big story, and for many Aboriginal people, a very sad story.

I would like to share some of my little stories that came into my mind when I thought about why we are gathered here. They are connected to the bigger child welfare story which is part of the big story about the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. There

Reflections on Aboriginal children and child protection: lesson learned both personal and professional

By Dorothy Scott

Dr Dorothy Scott was a keynote speaker at the SNAICC Conference. Desley Thompson, SNAICC Executive Member, introduced Dorothy saying: 'Dr Dorothy Scott is the Foundation Chair of the Australian Centre for Child Protection at the University of SA. She has had a distinguished career in advocating for children and families in the out of home care sector. I am sad to say

that this is Dr Scott's last appearance in her current role as she is retiring in a few weeks.

'Dr Scott, you have been a long standing friend of SNAICC and on behalf of the SNAICC Executive I would like to thank you for that friendship and hope that it may continue into the future whatever you may be doing.' Her edited speech is below.

are some lessons here about how we grow the children up strong so that they can have good stories to give to their children and their children's children, as Aboriginal people have done for thousands of years.

As a 14 year old Melbourne school girl I came to Central Australia with other students. This landscape captivated me and I could feel the spirits of the land. I also have memories of my mistakes. I remember climbing Uluru and taking a stone away with me. I did not know this was the wrong thing to do. I also remember near Alice Springs taking a photo of an Aboriginal mother and her little girl with a bright red jumper, and when I later looked at the photo I could tell that this mother did not want to be photographed but did not have the power to say no. I wish I could say sorry to her and to her little girl. What it must be like for a parent not to be able to say no, and for their child to see their mother or their father not able to say no to white people. Might this mean a child answers the questions *Who am I, where am I going and do I matter?* in ways that makes them feel that they are not strong, that they do not have control of their future, and that they do not matter. Is there a lesson in this for us today? At this same place, I remember a white man telling us all the Aboriginal children should be taken from their families and brought up by white people. I knew this was not right but remained silent. How many of us stay silent when we should speak?

We must never remain silent again. This week in The Australian newspaper words have been printed about 'removing all the children' that I never thought I would see again. It is important we realize these views are part of the national discourse again. As I flew to this SNAICC Conference, this was what I read.

'I'm outraged by the articles by Natasha Robinson *One little boys' anguish as culture put before safety* (24-25/7) and Tony Koch *Pathetic excuses perpetuate this fraud on vulnerable children* (24-25/7) on the plight of children in Aboriginal communities. How can this possibly be tolerated in prosperous Australia? Why do our indigenous people care so little for their children that they deny them an education and health care,

and allow them to be physically and sexually abused, so continuing the cycle of poverty and neglect for generation after generation? Perhaps the adults are beyond help but if the only way out of this appalling mess is to remove all the children and given them a future in mainstream Australia, let's do it, and to hell with cultural sensitivities... What is so special about Aboriginal culture, anyway, that it must be preserved at the expense of its children?'

Mike Phillips, Wollstonecraft, NSW

The Australian newspaper printed my reply:

'Mike Phillips' answer to the problem of child abuse and neglect in Indigenous communities will not work. Indigenous children are already nine times more likely to be in state care than other children. Some of these children clearly cannot return home because it is unsafe to do so but to remove children on the scale Phillips demands will only compound the problem. Will we remove the traumatized parents' subsequent children, and again and again and again? And where will they go – on to the revolving door of multiple foster placements in our overloaded child welfare system or shall we reopen the institutions where we warehoused children in the 1960s? These 'solutions' have failed. 'Some things are working but there is a long way to go. Improved housing and employment, alcohol control measures and rehabilitation services, child and family health nurses and early childhood education require sustained commitment by governments willing to work in partnership with Indigenous organisations and communities. This was the first recommendation of The Little Children are Sacred Report. It is time we tried it.' *Professor Dorothy Scott*

In Melbourne when I was 15, I was a volunteer at an institution for children taken from their parents. When I left school at seventeen my first job was at this institution and I remember two Aboriginal girls and their brother. The boy was about eight, his older sister about ten and his little sister three. I do not remember these children having visitors. They were very close to one another. The little girl often came up to me and climbed on to my lap for a cuddle. She trusted me. I let her trust me. One day I was asked to go with the children in a van driven by a man and take them far away to

Ballarat. There were two children's homes there – one for children of school age, and a home for children under five. The little girl clung to me and screamed as they tried to take her from me, the person she trusted. Her brother and her sister saw all of this. It was terrible. It is the worst experience in my life. How many times worse must be for an Aboriginal mother to have her child taken from her or for an Aboriginal man, protector of women and children, to be rendered powerless to prevent such an act. The lesson is that it is important to talk about the painful things that have been done in the name of child welfare. Back then white people did not hear those stories. Many Aboriginal people have now told those stories. Have they been heard?

My first job after leaving university was in a Social Welfare Department. There I learned what had happened to Aboriginal children placed in white foster families and adoptive families. There were children in foster care, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, who had not been seen by anyone in the department for years. Among the children I was responsible for there were several Aboriginal children living with white foster parents. Other young social workers and I asked the late Auntie Mollie Dyer to talk with the foster parents of Aboriginal children. The daughter of Aboriginal leader Margaret Tucker, Auntie Mollie Dyer set up the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care (VACCA) and led the changes in child welfare for Aboriginal children in Victoria. She worked to prevent Aboriginal children coming into care and to help foster parents and social workers understand what it was like for Aboriginal children already in foster care.

At the first Adoption Conference in Sydney in 1976, I remember Auntie Mollie Dyer and Aboriginal people from other states speaking out about what it was like for Aboriginal children to be adopted by white families. The children could not answer the question 'Who am I?'. Because of what I learned from Auntie Mollie Dyer I got into trouble from the Ombudsman for 'interfering' in the privately arranged adoptions of Aboriginal children by white families. But there is another side to this story. Sometimes I did not want to believe Aboriginal children could suffer abuse from their families. I remember one Aboriginal girl in foster care who had been sexually abused by her father when he was drunk, and I denied this despite the evidence.

My friend Muriel Bamblett, the former Chair of SNAICC and the CEO of VACCA, has often reminded us that white people sometimes do not want to see the suffering of Aboriginal children who are being abused as they are afraid of making the mistakes of the past. The lesson is that we must all face up to child abuse and neglect no matter whether it is an Aboriginal child or a non-Aboriginal child.

I also have good stories. I used to work for an organization that gave money to help Aboriginal organizations. I saw Aboriginal and

non-Aboriginal people who trusted each other, working together to create make things good for children and families, for example:

In the Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Service, Mums and Babies project this Indigenous-managed health service reached out to pregnant women from Aboriginal and TSI communities and encouraged them to use the service. Transport was provided and access was on a walk-in rather than an appointment basis. People were warmly welcome when they came. Photographs of babies born were displayed, and there were toys and a playgroup for children. The atmosphere felt right. The percentage of eligible women went from 23.8% to 61.2% in a couple of years. Antenatal care visits per pregnancy increased from three to seven and pre-term births reduced.

In Napranum on the west coast of Cape York, an inspiring outreach program was developed called **Parents and Learning (PaL)**, a two-year home based program, using books and activities to promote parents' confidence in themselves as their children's first teachers. PaL has spread to other Aboriginal communities in Victoria and NSW. The PaL program was the result of a collaborative effort between the Napranum preschool staff and Aboriginal parents. The parent or extended family member works with their child during school term. Parents read a story book and work with the educational activities each week, and PaL tutors deliver kits to the home each week. Local women with their own young children, are trained and supported to teach other parents how to use the kits. This has had very good results.

These good programs across Australia show us the way. They all:

- **Employ Aboriginal people who get good support/ training**
- **Have a warm and welcoming atmosphere**
- **Are high quality services, well evaluated**
- **Are based on close and equal relationships between those providing a service and those receiving a service (not fly in and fly out!)**
- **Focus on families' strengths and aspiration – they are not a shame job**
- **Bring families together & strengthen community**
- **Develop in partnership with community.**

Communities know what they want if time is taken to listen to them. Aboriginal men and women in some communities in some places are doing wonderful things such as fighting for alcohol control measures – the single biggest threat to the wellbeing of all children.

In 2006 I visited the **SA Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunyatjara Lands** with a group of Josephite nuns and Aboriginal women led by Waniwa Lester or Auntie Lucy Lester. We listened to the mothers and grandmothers tell us about the skinny children who were not getting enough food. This concerned us too as 'failure to thrive' is one of the main reasons that Aboriginal children in remote communities are

removed by child protection services. But it is heart breaking when these children are taken away. The grandmothers said that children cannot grow up strong if they are taken from their family and country, that Anangu children who are taken away 'feel like strangers in own country when they return – children taken away call other people 'mum' – wrong way – names of some people who were taken away not true now... we all want to stay in land to learn culture, not learn other people's culture...learn from own people'. Anangu women spoke a lot about hunger. Families cannot afford to buy food due to the high store prices. Much of the food was unhealthy. 'Take away food killing Anangu ...Need enough food for children to stay on Lands.' When asked what should happen when parents cannot care for their children properly the women said that the Anangu way was for grandmothers or aunties to look after the child but 'Grandmothers need help to buy food'. One very senior woman (since passed away) said she had been 'thinking safe place, feeding place'. The women were very positive about homemaker services being developed on the Lands such as in Amata by Brenda Stubbs. She employed young mothers of 'the skinny children' for a few hours in the morning to make the meals for elderly Anangu and then they fed their children in the centre and enjoyed a meal together.

Services based on 'case management' which single out parents who are not looking after their children properly are a shame job. Services which have an open door and an open heart and invite parents to be contributors, not clients, are not a shame job. Brenda said 'Of course, they are all like my own grandchildren... In everything I do I am saying it does not have to be like this'. She was sowing the seeds of hope in her community. Brenda Stubbs and countless other Aboriginal people who work in this way are nurturing hope and putting *kanyini* at the heart of what they do. In the Pitjantjatjara language the word *kanyini* is about how relationships within Indigenous society are held and how older people nurture and protect younger people within culture. The concept of 'holding' children within the context of your *waltja* (family) and *ngura* (homeland) are based on *tjukurrpa* (Dreaming/Law). These are concepts that the desert cultures know can protect children and make families and communities strong.

The mothers and the grandmothers said that programs had failed due to short-term funding, poor coordination and loss of key people. They expressed confusion about the many different projects delivered from a great distance. 'To tell the truth I don't know what they are doing'. Services were not seen as accountable. 'Need to sit in front of Anangu and say 'this is what I have done' – do proper report – work with communities. Work out what they want.' Anangu women could see how things could work, but there had been many broken promises.

(Continued page 13)



L-R: Back Barbara Martin, Rob Bekker, Sharon Anderson, Donna Bradley, Judith Mckay, Teresa Hutchins, Cecily Granites, Elise Rolfs Back-mid: Maisie Kitson, Audrey Kitson, Samantha Watson, Anna Rita Watson, Front mid: Minnie Nelson, Barbara Williams Marlette Ross, Robyn Lawson, Maisie Wayne, Raelene Front: Connie Borg, Malkirdi Rose, Selina Gorey

'One of my favourite sessions was the WETT Warlpiri women – they had come a long way, were thinking about the future for their kids, expanding, making sure the kids are educated, doing all the good things with community spirit,' said Dot Bagshaw SNAICC Executive Member WA.

Kurdu pirrjirdi nyinanjaku manu yungurlu pina jarri – Little children to stay strong and learn well

Eighteen women from the four Warlpiri communities in the Tanami Desert came together for the SNAICC conference. The conference was a major milestone for the Warlpiri Early Childhood Care and Development Project who presented on three projects:

- **Warlpiri Education and Training Trust (WETT):** established after some Warlpiri teachers saw an opportunity to set aside royalty money to be used for their children via education and community training activities in Nyirripi, Willowra, Yuendumu and Lajamanu.
- **Early Childhood Care and Development Project (ECCD):** established to improve health and education outcomes for young children through self-governed community early childhood activities.
- **Implementing two way learning:** culture & language learning in Warlpiri schools, first

in the language used at home then English.

Reflecting on their experience some of the women said,

'It was a really good conference, I enjoyed the broader activities such as weaving and discussions on children from other countries, but most of all I was very happy to share our work with the other ladies from the other Warlpiri communities: Lajamanu, Yuendumu and Nyirripi.'

Maisie Napaljarri Kitson: Willowra

'It was good that people from interstate and overseas were attending. The keynote speakers were really good. I enjoyed the power point presentations (visuals) not just having people talking. We were able to talk about our language and culture program in Warlpiri schools which is really important for our kids. Lots of people asked questions after the presentation. What was good was that it was all Yapa people talking about language and culture.' Fiona Napaljarri

Gibson: Nyirripi

'The WETT presentation was a really strong one to speak up. The Warlpiri women were all together (childcare and WETT). We were one team in unity. There was lots of sharing stories. People learning from us and knowing us, and us learning from them and knowing them.'

Maisie Napurrula Wayne: Yuendumu

'It was deadly the way they put it all together with people from everywhere. The woman from Canada spoke very strong and made me cry with her stories of what happened to their first people. It was very sad. The presentations we put on made us very nervous at first but it is important to share our stories with others so we can swap learning - they learn from us and we learn from them.'

Marlkirdi Napurrurla Rose: Lajamanu

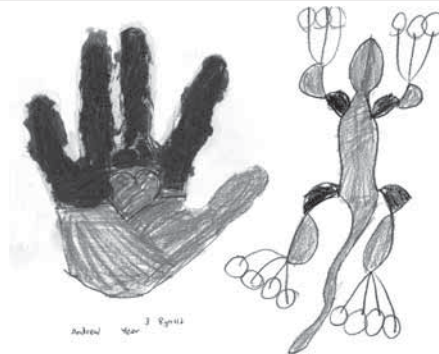
Story by Rob Bekker

Contact: Teresa.Hutchins@worldvision.com.au

STORIES OF GROWING UP STRONG IN CULTURE COMPETITION

As part of the SNAICC Child Rearing Stories project we encouraged primary and secondary children to contribute art on the theme *How I was grown up strong in my Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.*

We were thrilled to receive 46 thoughtful and beautiful entries, and all were displayed at our conference. Every entry will receive a certificate of appreciation and a book. Prizes winners were:



Love animals and love our Aboriginal culture. By Andrew Vakalasaqele, Kingswood Park Public School, Yr 3, Age 8

Odetta Maxwell, Challa Gardens Primary School, SA (essay)

Amanda Goguman, Warlayiriti Arts Centre, WA (photography)

Thornbury Primary VIC & Tagai College, Badu Campus TSI (joint winners schools prize)

People's Choice winner Wazana-May Kabay/Nuga.

Lelly Cooper, Thornbury Primary School, VIC (Prep)

Walter Nona, Badu Island, Torres Strait & Andrew Vakalasaqele, Kingswood Park Public School, NSW (joint winners Grade 3 – 4)

Isobel Maxwell, Challa Gardens Primary School, SA and Wazana-May Kabay/Nuga, Rasmussen State School, QLD (joint winners Grade 5 – 6)



from small to big

I chose the proud words 'from small to big' to show myself growing wiser, stronger and better as each day must pass on. The brightness in the snake represents the hardship and work gone into making my education great, from my parents to helpful teachers Lyn and Ms Amor in the Inbarendi Room. The black and white surrounding the snake is to highlight the thick and thin I have been through in my short lifetime. The various patterns represent the strength and creativity of the artwork that runs through my strong family. By: Isobel Maxwell, Challa Gardens Primary School, Year 6



L-R: Roslynne Webb (Noogaleek Children Centre MACS), Maxine McGrady (Toomelah Playgroup), Judy McKay Tempest (IPSU NSW & ACT), Rupert Peters, Toby Ginger, Andy Tjilari

Ngangkari healing the spirit of children

Rupert Peters, Andy Tjilari, and Toby Ginger are Ngangkari (traditional healers) who work for NPY Women's Council Ngangkari Project, in SA and NT. They shared their wisdom with a SNAICC conference workshop – the audience was captivated by their grace and mindfulness.

Andy, Toby and Rupert were taught to recognise spirits and all became Ngangkari as children. They have passed on this knowledge to their own children just as their grandfathers passed it to them.

They continue to work in the community and have developed strong, complimentary relationships with western doctors who often approach them to work on a child's spiritual wellbeing.

The Ngangkari spoke of their desire to help children in the community who are uncared for and have lost their spirit: 'When kids are alone they can get into trouble and the spirit moves in the body putting it out of centre. As Ngangkari we can see their spirit and we put it back where it belongs'.



Agnes Abbott and an evening at Akeyulerre Healing Centre

Agnes Abbott, an Eastern Arrente woman, was one of the many men and women hosting SNAICC delegates at the welcome at the Akeyulerre Healing Centre Alice Springs. Agnes Abbott told SNAICC News:

'I've raised 13 kids and I have about ten great grandchildren. I used to work for rations, riding horses, mustering cattle and fencing on Todd River Downs and Lambi Station. I've never stopped working and I had my first and last grog when I was about 14 years old.

'Kathy Abbott and Jane Vadiveloo started talking with the Elders and setting the vision for this healing centre quite a few years ago. I'm Auntie for Kathy - she did a big job here making this a cultural service, a safe place. I've been teaching bush medicine here for a while, taking the young girls out bush to our outstation on the edge of the Simpson Desert, telling stories about country.

'I work here four days a week. Culture is about country and learning the medicine, the plants, the trees, how to cut up and cook kangaroo, teaching healing songs too. The young ones come and go, but they are getting more interested again. The older people maybe stopped passing stories on, but now older people are teaching again – I show them the old fences the gidgee, the mulga fences I used to dig on the station. I work, work, work – all my life. Last year I went

to Darwin and got sick on the way, it was the first time in my life I've been sick.'

What's her secret we asked? 'I work hard, I try to be loving and kind with people, not just to family, no alcohol - nothing. Something I would like to say is for people to look at those fence posts we put in. They are still there. I'm proud of all the work we did on those rations.'

Akeyulerre was developed to promote the ability, strength and expertise in Aboriginal community and culture; that if we reinforce our own abilities and expertise that health and well being will improve.

Young and old people will have a sense of pride, belonging and ability. Akeyulerre does not require people to be sick. It requires people to have a commitment to family and future.

Contact: admin@akeyulerre.org.au



(Dorothy Scott: Continued from page 11) 'Government need to talk proper story.' Yet there was still some hope. They said 'We all know what is happening... We like to see these things in place... make this a true story... don't know if there are any true stories yet.'

Those words echo in my heart. There are good and true stories, but we must stop breaking promises or we will crush the hope that is still there, in some place, perhaps just still there. **Hope is like water in the desert – it is the most precious resource we have as human beings.** That there was still hope in the hearts of these women after so many stories have not been true stories, moves me very deeply. We all need to nurture hope in the heart of one another, in each family and community. Only then will we have hope in the heart of our nation. And the source of hope is the children – their beauty, joy, creativity, competence, the courage and wisdom.

Let me finish with a story of Stephen Nona, a Torres Strait Islander boy who, along with his two sisters, was commended for brave conduct at Queensland Government House. The official citation read:

Master Nona, then aged 11, assisted two members of his family to swim to seek help and survive being stranded for six days after his family's boat capsized in Torres Strait on 6 July 2004... Master Nona encouraged his sisters to swim with him to seek help and managed to reach a small rocky outcrop approximately 400 metres away. The children survived there for three days by eating oysters. They made a decision to again swim for help in the hope that they and their family would be rescued. They then swam 6 km to Matu Island. When the girls were tired, Master Nona told them to hang on to him so that he could tow them on his back, or he pushed them along. The children survived on Matu by eating native fruits and drinking coconut milk, and Master Nona continued to reassure his sisters that they would be saved. After 3 more days the children were rescued by their uncle. Tragically the other occupants of the dingy (his mother father and younger brother) were never found.

This is a story about how these children used the ancient knowledge to survive. The words Stephen Nona said, presumably in the language of his people, to urge his sisters, who were poor swimmers, to leave the rocky outcrop and go back into the sea, were: **We swim with one heart and one mind.** This is the courage and the wisdom of a child. We too need to work together, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. We must swim with one heart and one mind if we are to grow up the children so they are strong, can know where they come from, know who they belong to, know who they are, where they are going and that they matter. And so they have lives full of good and true stories to tell their children's children, and that these can become part of the big story of our nation.

The Warburton breakfast program (WA)



Back (L-R): Jodie West, Jessie Nyingurta West, Ros Beadle, Front (L-R): Melissa Holland, Olive Ngalpingka Lawson, Winnie Hunt with the first copy of their *Breakfast Story Book*.

The Warburton Breakfast Ladies and Ros, School-Community Liaison Officer, from Warburton in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands, WA presented an excellent session (along with the NPY Women's Council Child Nutrition Program presentation).. Ros Beadle and the Warburton team writes:

The Warburton Breakfast Ladies started our program in November 2008. It was a community initiative addressing concerns about low school attendance and the desire to give our kids a healthy start to the day. A pool of over 20 Ngaanyatjarra ladies have been involved in the program, making a healthy breakfast at the Warburton Remote School for 15-30 kids each day.

Since the program was established a wide range of other activities have emerged including a catering service and the development of literature materials based

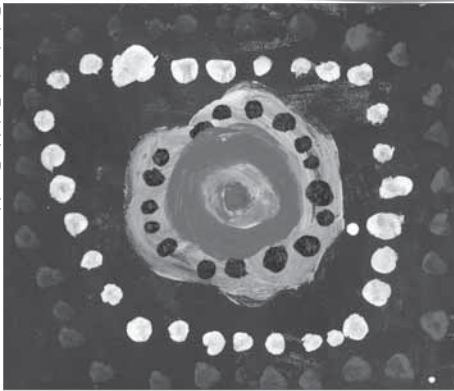
on topics which Ngaanyatjarra children can strongly identify. We are hoping to soon launch *The Breakfast Story Book*, which the women have developed using photos of their activities and early reading words from the Aboriginal Literacy Strategy. The women's presence at the school has made the school a more child friendly place and contributed to developing school-community relationships.

The participation of the Breakfast women at conferences such as SNAICC and other significant events is part of building capacity in the community and providing strong role models for our young people. In a few weeks we will be moving into our new building, the Family Place, specifically developed for community activities on the school grounds.

Contact: rosalindbeadle@hotmail.com



Arnernte Men's Dance group were part of the Alice Springs SNAICC Conference closing ceremony



I am a Murri woman from the Gomilaroi and Anaiwan tribes of north west NSW. My dreaming is the Yurundiali (Goanna).

I am the mother of 13 year old Murri-Jak. Murri was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder at two and a half years.

Murri (meaning Aboriginal person in Gomilaroi) was born premature at 24 weeks gestation and from that day he has fought to survive and make sense of his world.

Murri was a thriving baby until around 16-18 months. Overnight he lost the ability to say Mummum, Daddad and Bubba. When I noticed that Murri was more engrossed with the fluff on the carpet than with me I knew something was wrong but I put it down to him being born premature.

Initially Murri was tested for hearing difficulties and I was told he had 'selective deafness.' The reality was so much bigger.

Our local GP referred us to a neurologist who diagnosed Murri within 15 minutes of attempts to engage him in age appropriate activities. Instead of interacting with the doctor, Murri was more interested in the stethoscope and the clinic washbasin taps.

That day my life changed ... drastically. When told of Murri's condition I naively asked what could be done to 'fix' it. I was not prepared for the words 'life-long disability'. I felt I might pass out. I didn't ring my family with the news as I hadn't digested it. I didn't know what Autism was. I was very confused and alone. When I got home I had nowhere to go. I wanted to know about Autism, find treatments, know what kind of life my son was going to have. I desperately sought out other mothers of children with Autism. I wanted to learn about my boy.

The only place I had was the local library where I hid in the aisles and cried as I read about autism. Every word was a physical blow to my heart. I grieved for my 'lost' boy. My first information workshop felt more like the funeral for my hopes as I cried the whole time.

The following years were extremely difficult and I felt abandoned by friends and some family. Murri's behaviour was becoming erratic and this added to my isolation as I

MURRI – a mother's story by Jacqueline French

A story by a parent interviewed for the SNAICC/Parenting Research Centre Early Days project on Autism Spectrum Disorders. This story was presented at the 2010 SNAICC Conference in Alice Springs.

thought people wouldn't understand and as I still didn't understand it myself.

It became a process of not just educating myself but ensuring our families and the community as a whole were also aware of Murri's needs and behaviours.

Between 3-5 years children with Autism are especially difficult in establishing daily patterns and learning behavioural triggers. Psychologically I was ready to crash. I took Murri to see the doctor because he hadn't slept for 48 hours and I was exhausted. Local services were then contacted for respite.

Murri had already been attending an early intervention programme two mornings a week but this had little effect. I knew that Murri needed a more intense behavioural management programme and that early intervention was not providing the consistent intensive therapy he urgently needed.

At four and a half Murri started pre-school two mornings a week combined with two mornings in what was to become his future special ed class. Funding was sought to employ a pre-school one-on-one aide. Initially I was consulted about every detail but following the resignation of the aide another was hired without my consultation. Murri would come home from school very stressed. I couldn't understand why. After observing Murri with the aide it was clear that he couldn't cope with the pitch of her voice. I pulled him out of pre-school because I didn't want to wait for another aide to be hired and watch him experience a 'meltdown'.

Next year Murri started school full time in a high needs special education class. The first few years were OK but as Murri grew so did his behaviours and many times I was contacted because the teachers and aides couldn't cope. Sometimes I would refuse to let them send him home and I'd tell them to learn to cope or get another job.

The year he turned eleven, I had many school visits with the principal and counsellor who seemed hell bent on Murri attending high school the following year. I was against it, feeling Murri was not ready for another schooling environment and that he had the right to stay in primary school until the end of his twelfth year. I voiced my concerns but it seemed as though on deaf ears. I contacted the regional manager for education to advocate on my behalf and advised that

Murri was able to stay in primary for another year. This was an unnecessary fight however I was left with no alternative as I felt the school was trying to push him out.

I continually searched for more effective treatments. I always believed that Murri was and still is capable of learning much more and had his education been more structured to his needs he would have made more progress in communication and coping.

When Murri was nine I learned of Woodbury – the only specialised school in NSW that practices Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA). I was determined to find a way to get my boy in, even though it meant re-locating to Sydney and miraculously scraping together \$1000 per week for fees.

I applied and travelled from Moree to Sydney for information sessions. The following April I received an e-mail notifying of a placement for a child with his age range and a request for a very detailed application package including a DVD of Murri both in a school setting and at home. I was given two weeks to compile the information for a panel to assess his 'suitability'. As I had received the notice in school holidays I wasn't able to complete the DVD. I requested to submit the DVD by the end of the first school week. I was then notified the panel had already selected another child. It didn't surprise me as there were no other Aboriginal children enrolled and it seemed only for the elite.

There is a big gap between the quality of treatments and accessible therapies for children with Autism. A person's income can determine whether a child with Autism will access successful behavioural programmes.

Murri has been working well with cue cards and together with his current school and the Northcott Society (new to Moree), we are building the range of visual cards that he can relate to. I am trying to introduce gluten, lactose and casein free food to his diet, which is difficult as he already has an established diet and gluten free foods are expensive.

The visual cue cards are our main source for teaching communication skills and we have personalised them with language Murri recognises. He acknowledges certain Gomilaroi words so together with the photo we write those words alongside the English.

As an Aboriginal mother (*Contd. pg 18*)

(Murri – Contd. from pg 17) I have experienced countless barriers in terms of appropriate respite and recreation services, access to high level behavioural intervention and access to support outside my immediate family. I do not access certain local services given their inability to follow up with intervention plans specific to his behavioural needs. I do not access the local SOS respite service because there are no Aboriginal staff and the care workers did nothing but complain about his behaviours. I find our local DADHC worker to be very uncooperative, putting up more barriers instead of trying to help us through.

I am wary of working with non-Aboriginal people as they sometimes don't understand where I'm coming from and often my passionate demands for help have been misinterpreted as aggressive, but I've learned that if I don't speak up for my son, nobody will. Sometimes services cannot understand that it is culturally important for Aboriginal people to show respect for protocol by attending funerals. My partner and I have had to miss many funerals because we can't get extra respite. It's also important for services to understand that after years of doing the 'service beat' sometimes a parent simply just gets fed up with attending reviews and going through the usual round of repetitive questions.

I have always felt it important that Murri's care workers are Aboriginal as;

- **They persevere with him and do not complain if he's too confronting.**
- **He is known to different parts of the Aboriginal community and they take him to Aboriginal events.**
- **They provide consistency with home life.**
- **He becomes part of their family.**

For the past eight years Murri has had the same respite care worker four hours a week. When alternate workers were tried he would have mini meltdowns. This particular carer lives on one of the missions in town and everybody there knows Murri. All the kids call out to him at school and in social settings and this helps my other two boys to see that their brother is loved and accepted.

I have always included Murri in his community by taking him to places and events such as the pool, fetes, football games and NAIDOC. It is important communities acknowledge their special needs people and I've always felt that Murri has the same rights as anybody else to feel he belongs.

Before Murri came along many Aboriginal people in my community weren't aware of Autism. Many speculated that 20-30 years ago certain people displayed signs of Autism but nobody knew what it was therefore nobody spoke of it. They had

their own special place and were loved and accepted just like Murri is. I believe that the whole community has a special responsibility to Murri especially his families. Many times a neighbour has brought him home after he has escaped through a window to get to the park or they've found him trying to get in to their car to be taken for a drive. I am fortunate that my neighbours and the Aboriginal community are aware of his disability and most look out for him however it is a continual process of having to educate people and sometimes I get sick of it.

We have a huge extended family. On many occasions teachers or care workers have been watched and sometimes pulled up by one of his mob for not handling him appropriately. Sometimes this hasn't been very well received but Murri is much loved and his Elders worry for his well-being and his cousins are taught to respect him and watch out for him.

Both our families are very protective of Murri. Murri has many positive male influences who love and protect him. He loves his grandfather and his uncles and has an unbreakable bond with his father.

For the men of my family, Murri's diagnosis was very hard and my father in particular went through a very hard time. He grieved for the man he should've been and the life he should've had. My father had spent hours with him in the neo-natal unit and has a unique relationship with him. Murri is getting too big and too strong now but Dad loves special time with him and will do what he can. Dad escorts Murri to and from school every day in a taxi and occasionally watches the football with him.

My mother and my sisters provide endless support and even though they can't do for Murri because he's too strong for them, they will look after my other boys for a night or two or do some cooking or cleaning jobs that I can never get the time to do.

My family and friends understand that as Murri grows I have had to make a lot of changes. We've had to cut back the amount of time my nieces can spend at the house, we can't have a big mob walking in and out or have too many sounds happening at once. Murri cannot differentiate between sounds and this can cause a meltdown which can take hours to bring him out of. When he's ready for bed the house has to be in total darkness and silence. If a tap is dripping he will hear it and can't sleep. Time spent as a family away from home is very limited.

This year Murri started high school and is doing well. He participates in many social skills activities however the shopping ventures are hard as he has an aversion to supermarket lights.

He is a strong and robust boy who enjoys a healthy diet, though he has sensitivities to

any cold foods and doesn't eat fruit. He is a good looking and is extremely well built. I receive many compliments for his looks!!!!

He is lovable and affectionate, loves to be cuddled. He gives me kisses and holds my hand. He is physically super active, likes trampolining, water play, walks and climbing equipment. He is non-verbal and nappy dependent. He is currently medicated daily for hyper-activity, both for his safety and well being and my own sanity.

For the past year we have had one full weekend per month of respite with extra nights during the school holidays. The respite home is an hour away and his father and I transport him ourselves because firstly it is more cost effective and we know he's arrived safely.

I wonder who will take care of Murri when I'm not around. I would like a group home for him to live in with full assistance. I would also rather that he live in a home with the special needs cousins that he is growing up with where his family can volunteer to help. I try not to think about the future too much as it can be very depressing and Murri can pick up on my feelings and it creates a much more positive vibe in the house when I'm coping well.

Many times I could've walked out the door and kept going. For a long time I went through the feelings of 'why me?' and 'why my boy'. What helps me know that I've been chosen by my Ancestors to be Murri's mother. My mother and father always reminds me that for some reason my ancestors sent him to me as not every woman can handle such a heavy load.

For a long time I grieved for him and dwelled on the things he couldn't do. Now I focus on what Murri can do and we work hard on continual improvement. Like every child, Murri likes to make his Mum happy too and works hard to understand our routine. Every day is hard but every day I feel blessed to be his mother.

The best thing I ever did for myself was to go back to school. I had to pull all my family support in but it is helping to empower me and my sons are feeling that strength. Murri drives me to be the best person I can be and is the drive behind my relentless search for appropriate treatments.

Before my grandmother passed over to the Dreamtime she could see that something was wrong. She told me that 'God dealt me a dodgy hand... but if I play my cards right I can still win the game.' For me winning the game means never giving up and I'll never give up on my boy.

Yaalu.

*SNAICC / Parenting Research Centre Early Days project <http://srs.snaicc.asn.au/projects/>
Contact: julie@snaicc.asn.au*



Sandy at SNAICC

My name is Sandra Lee Barber. I am a descendant of the Yorta Yorta Nation (northern Victoria). I discovered that I was Aboriginal about 15 years ago and therefore I have been on an exciting journey ever since. This is why I am proud to be pictured in front of this historic SNAICC banner from 1988.

I am currently the SNAICC Administrative Assistant and am generally the first point of contact when you call the SNAICC office. I have been working at SNAICC for just over a year, with a wonderful (and growing) team. I am also

a board member on the Maya Healing Centre, and am also involved in the Darebin Disability Advisory Group and the National Aboriginal Disabilities Network Steering Committee.

I'm involved with these groups as I have a disability myself and it's great to have an input and a voice for disability and also give an Aboriginal perspective.

I am studying a Diploma of Early Childhood (having previously worked at Yappera MACS), which will come in handy as the daughter I adopted out 30 years ago has made contact with me, she has just had a baby and has invited me to come and visit! Can you imagine my joy?

Contact: sandy@snaicc.asn.au

SNAICC web changes

Three years on, the SNAICC website is having a make-over. Fraynetwork Multimedia will complete the upgrade by late 2010. The draft samples are really impressive and communicate so much more smoothly.

SNAICC ran some usability tests and Steve Darmody and Robert Savage from Fraynetwork hosted a focus group to scope what needs improving on the site. SNAICC, VAEAI and VACCHO staff attended to give their valuable feedback. Steve and Fraynetwork are now coming up with some impressive solutions.

SNAICC operates two websites; one for SNAICC itself and one for the SNAICC

Resource Service. The key decision has been made to integrate each site into a single simplified web presence. The key consideration is to allow users to find information more easily via:

1. Consolidated information architecture
2. Integrated content management system
3. A publishing system for e-newsletters
4. An enhanced e-commerce capability.

This development sets up a foundation for years to come with future components to be added to this core solution. The new site will enhance the SNAICC brand through imagery and content with an enhanced system for information in multiple locations based on taxonomies such as category, type, format, issue area, project and policy area.

Contact: tatiana@snaicc.asn.au

NT Inquiry Into Child Protection System

The report from the NT Inquiry Into Child Protection System in the NT is due to be released on 17 September this year.

SNAICC hopes the recommendations of the report will reflect the needs and the wishes of the NT Aboriginal community. Frank Hytten, SNAICC CEO said: 'Supporting Aboriginal organisations in

communities is the first line of defence against the abuse of children and should be the cornerstone of any approach to Aboriginal child protection.' The board had been due to report in June but the high number of submissions (150 written and 70 oral) plus travelling time required meant the time was extended.

SNAICC hosts dinner after the first-ever United Nations DPI/ NGO conference in Australia

SNAICC is pleased to host a dinner on 2 September 2010 in Melbourne, Australia. The dinner is for delegates of the 63rd Annual United Nations DPI/NGO Conference in Melbourne, Australia whose work includes a focus on Indigenous children and families.

Facilitated by Prof Marcia Langton, Foundation Chair of Australian Indigenous Studies at the University of Melbourne, the dinner discussion will focus on engaging existing networks and resources and building partnerships between Indigenous peoples and NGOs. SNAICC acknowledges the support for this event of Prof. Philip Batterham, the NGO community and in particular, Save the Children, Oxfam and World Vision.

Contact: emily@snaicc.asn.au



The First Nations forum at SNAICC conference

Recognising the value of sharing knowledge and experiences, SNAICC convened a lunchtime forum to discuss the current work for Indigenous children and their rights in Australia and overseas. The forum was chaired by SNAICC Chairperson, Steve Larkins, and inuded contributions by Canadian Cindy Blackstock. Topics included:

- The upcoming work of SNAICC and the Indigenous Sub Group (the ISG), including the SNAICC dinner on 2 September 2010 for the UN Conference Delegates (see story above).
- Experiences under the NT Intervention,
- NGO reporting of Australia's compliance with its obligations under the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, and the General Comment 13 which gives direction to countries on protecting rights of children in child & family welfare systems.

Contact: emily@snaicc.asn.au



Joseph Sparling & Zena Buckskin of Kaurina Plains MACS SA

Dr Joseph Sparling's study tour and the Abecedarian approach to early childhood education

Dr Joseph Sparling is an early childhood researcher, educator and former teacher and principal from the USA. He is a key contributor to the Abecedarian approach and co-author of *LearningGames*[®], educational resources that have been used widely in the States. Dr Sparling was a keynote speaker at the Alice Springs national SNAICC Conference and has been visiting early childhood services across Australia seeking input on using the Abecedarian approach in our services.

What is the Abecedarian approach?

The Abecedarian approach involves simple tools and games to engage children from birth onwards in attentive learning and communication activities. It is grounded in evidence-focused research with over 30 years results of improved outcomes with at-risk children. Results indicated by the age of eight, children who participated in the Abecedarian approach subsequently performed better academically than those who had no preschool experience. Benefits were gained regardless of disadvantage, family factors and other contextual issues.

Benefits of the Abecedarian approach

When children who participated in the Abecedarian approach from 1972 to 1977 were followed up at age 21, their life situation showed significant improvements in contrast to a control group of similarly-disadvantaged children without preschool intervention. The key benefits for the Abecedarian group at follow-up were:

- higher rate of attendance in tertiary education (36% attended 4-year college courses vs. 14% in the control group);
- higher rate of participation in skilled jobs (47% vs. 27%);
- fewer symptoms of depression; and
- almost four times more likely to report an active and healthy lifestyle.

Two papers from Dr. Sparling are online at the SNAICC Conference website – one on research findings and the other on practices arising from the approach.

In May this year, Dr Joseph Sparling gave a presentation to the SNAICC National Executive and staff on his Abecedarian approach to improving outcomes for disadvantaged children in early years education and care.

At that time, Dr Sparling was conducting research at Melbourne University on applying the Abecedarian approach in Victoria / Australia ('the 3A Approach'). This Abecedarian approach includes *LearningGames*[®], a series of booklets with simple, one-on-one exercises for engaging children in educational activities.

The National Executive responded enthusiastically to Sparling's presentation, and gave support to a preliminary study of the applicability of the Abecedarian approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child care centres. SNAICC was impressed by the 3A Approach's strong evidence base for early intervention and educational gains with at-risk groups, and its compatibility with the federal government's Early Years Learning Framework and the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development.

CEO Frank Hytten then invited Dr Sparling to give a keynote address and a workshop at the SNAICC Conference in July and to conduct consultations on the model across the country in August. After the SNAICC conference, Dr Sparling visited a sample of childcare agencies and services across the country to gauge interest in the 3A Approach. He also met with federal and state/territory bureaucrats to discuss how the 3A Approach maps against

the Early Years Learning Framework and might be implemented with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

The focus of the consultation was:

- Could the *LearningGames*[®] materials be adapted for use with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children?
- Could a long-term workforce development and training strategy be developed around 3A?

Many of the centres that Dr Sparling visited felt that the *LearningGames*[®] material could be adapted for use by their workers and families, and were keen for SNAICC to work on producing a version or versions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Some childcare centre staff were also eager to participate in the roll out of a 3A training model.

SNAICC will follow up the consultation with a report to government on the potential applicability of the 3A approach with our child care centres. SNAICC will also commence scoping the development of *LearningGames*[®]-based resource.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workforce Relations (DEEWR), the Parent Research Centre (PRC) and the Australian Centre for Child Protection (ACPP) jointly funded Sparling's consultation process, and SNAICC's scoping and production of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander version of *LearningGames*[®].

SNAICC thanks all the services and staff involved in Dr Sparling's visits for their support, particularly the National Executive and the Indigenous Professional Support Units.

Contact eleanor@snaicc.asn.au

Dr Sparling & SNAICC visited:

NT: Congress MACS, Alice Springs **WA:** Yorganop Association Inc, Perth; Coolabaroo MACS, Morley **QLD:** Gundoo MACS, Cherbourg; Remote Area & Torres Strait Islander Child Care Advisory Association, Cairns **SA:** Minya Bunhii MACS, Ceduna; Koonibba Child Care Centre, Ceduna; Kaurina Plains Early Childhood Centre, Elizabeth;

Kura Yerlo Child Care Centre (MACS), Largs Bay; Minya Porlar & Gerard Creche, Murray Bridge **VIC:** Yappera MACS, Melbourne; Koori Workforce Training, Geelong; Murray Valley MACS, Robinvale; De Garis Kindergarten, Mildura; Lulla's MACS, Shepparton; Echuca MACS, Echuca; Lake Tyres MACS, Lake Tyres; Gunai Lidj MACS, Morwell; Gippsland & Eastern Gippsland Aboriginal Corp; Whittlesea City Council,

Whittlesea **QLD:** Gundoo MACS, Cherbourg; Remote Area & Torres Strait Islander Child Care Advisory Association, Cairns **NSW:** Biralee MACS, Tamworth; The Settlement, Chippendale; Gujaga MACS, La Perouse; Noogaleek MACS, Wollongong **Conferences:** SNAICC National Conference, Alice Springs, NT; IPSU conference for Aboriginal staff, Melbourne, VIC



Dr Joseph Sparling at Gajaga MACS, La Perouse working together on Game 53: *Build Together* (12–24 months) 'I made my blocks just like yours.'... 'Here are some other things we can build.'... While building with blocks and other materials, copy what your child builds and later inviting her to follow your lead. Your child may become more aware of patterns and learn that patterns can be repeated or varied. Dr Sparling said: 'Child care staff often say how will we find the time in our daily routine to apply the *LearningGames*, but it takes a lot of time to do random things — maybe as much as a directed approach like the Abecedarian model.'



Making a line (12–24 months): Find places to make some lines with a stick or your fingers. Talk about the lines 'You made a wiggly line in the sand'. He will begin to notice differences too. This encourage the child to be aware of the many kinds of marks he can make with his hands or a tool. (Graphic from *LearningGames* 2005)

The Brewarrina Children and Family Centre

The Brewarrina Children and Family Centre in north-west NSW will be one of the 35 new centres rolling out across Australia. It will service an area covering about 2000 people from Brewarrina, Goodooga, Weilmoringle and Carinda.

The Local Reference Group plans for the service to be up and running by the end of 2012. This September they will invite all community members to come celebrate the arrival of a new service. Members of the local reference group will be available to talk with community members, who will be

asked what services they would like to see as part of the centre, and of course there will be fun activities for all the kids.

'We are still in early stages', said Reference Group Chair Jenny Barker, a Ngemba woman and general manager of the Northern Star Aboriginal Corporation.

'We are having fortnightly meetings, getting a handle on what we want and organising a tour of some other similar buildings in NSW and the contracts will go out shortly. We are looking for land which is a bit difficult as but we want three blocks, and that's difficult as it's only a small place.

'Our Reference Group has good representation, and we are all getting on well – our community organisations, and federal and state government agencies. We say what we want and the way it is.

'We are a strong community and we want to tap into our local economy, and to keep it in the community – we are such a small community we know our needs and we need to fix it in a true partnership.'

Reference Group Chair Jenny Barker is also Ngemba Community Working Party chair and Absec delegate for Keeping Them Safe on the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly.

Contact: northernstar1@bigpond.com

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander KidsMatter Early Childhood

SNAICC, in partnership with the Australian Psychological Society (APS) and *beyondblue: the national depression initiative*, have launched a new project which aims to build the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood services to improve the social and emotional wellbeing of children from birth to school age.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander KidsMatter Early Childhood project forms part of a suite of activities under the broader KidsMatter mental health prevention, promotion, early intervention initiative. The project is funded primarily by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing. The project will use a collaborative action research model. The project team will

form partnerships with four participating early childhood services to develop a training package and supporting resources. These resources will assist services to build their capacity to support the social and emotional wellbeing of the children attending their services. Resources will be culturally relevant and the training package developed specific to the needs of the partner services.

The initial phase of the project will operate until April 2011. An evaluation of Phase 1 will recommend further developments or enhancements to the initiative. We expect this evaluation research, the training and resources, and other findings will inform a proposal to the Department of Health and Ageing to fund a subsequent Phase 2 or national pilot of the initiative to be rolled

out to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood services around the country. The project team comprises APS staff Carmen Naivalu and Jo Lawrence and three SNAICC staff – Mark Lawrence, Jade Fraser and Samantha Smith.

Contact: mark@snaicc.asn.au

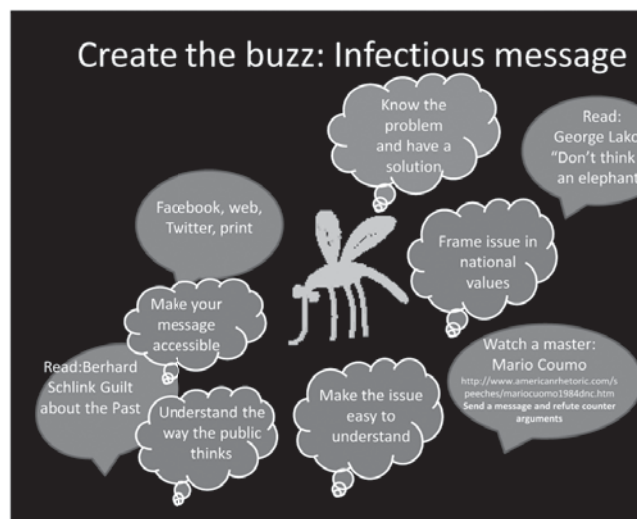
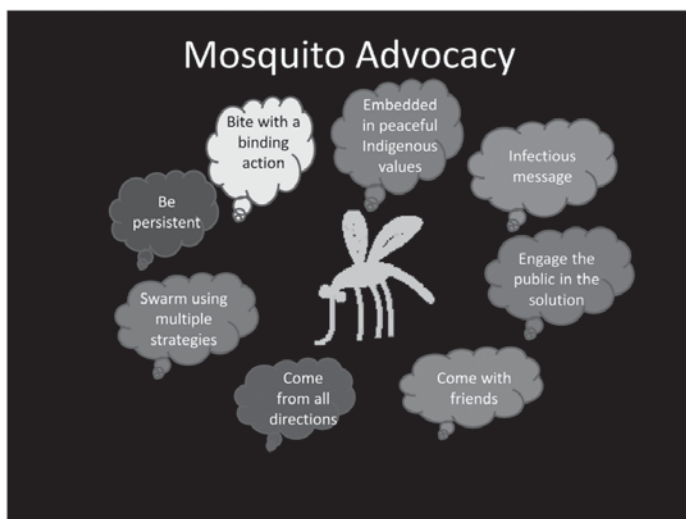


Jade Fraser & Samantha Smith, SNAICC Kids Matter officers, will be visiting early childhood services over coming months.



Mosquito advocacy – Getting into trouble for doing the right thing – Cindy Blackstock

First Nations Child and Family Caring Society



SNAICC Conference keynote speaker **Cindy Blackstock** (see page 10 this issue) presented two workshops on **Mosquito Diplomacy**, including one at the **Alice Springs Tangentyere Council**.

You can see this extraordinary overhead presentation on mosquito diplomacy through Cindy's online - a must for everyone in our sector in how to advocate best for our children and families.

The presentation is on www.snaicc.asn.au/policy/conference

The slides cover the basic steps (with examples) of mosquito diplomacy and the work of the First Nations Caring Society.

Key steps to effective advocacy:

1. Document the problem
2. Evidence based solutions
3. Ensure gov't has resources
4. Launch planning for voluntary and involuntary advocacy simultaneously
5. Mosquito Advocacy

Mosquito advocacy:

1. **Create the buzz: Infectious message**
2. **The swarm: Come with friends!**
3. **Examples of Caring Society partners**
4. **Avoid the swat: multiple strategies**
5. **Examples of Caring Society Strategies**
6. **The sting – binding action**
7. **Swarm and don't give up!**
8. **Examples of Caring Society Strategies**

Other keys to success

- Ensure all work reflects indigenous values and respect for all
- Have a key champion who is a good public speaker
- Remember most movements defeat themselves – so be disciplined
- Grass roots are key!

Other slides cover:

The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on First Nations child welfare
 The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal on First Nations child welfare
 Mosquito Advocacy: Jordan's Principle

Thanks Cindy, and The First Nations Caring Society www.fncaringsociety.com

Arnold Bloch Leibler lawyers attended the SNAICC SGM to discuss the implications of the new SNAICC rules and statement of purpose. SNAICC presented them a mounted poster to thank them for their work.

L-R: Emma Rattray (Arnold Bloch Leibler), SNAICC Chair Steve Larkins, Emily Cheesman & Sue Beecher (SNAICC staff), Peter Seidel (Partner, Public Interest Law Arnold Bloch Leibler), Frank Hytten (CEO SNAICC)

Changes to SNAICC constitution

The last few years have seen a lot of changes at SNAICC. To better reflect these changes, a new Rules of Association and Statement of Purposes were adopted by SNAICC Members at a Special General Meeting held in Melbourne 19 May.

These two documents were passed unanimously. They replace the old SNAICC constitution, whilst retaining its spirit, aims and objectives. The new documents provide more detail on SNAICC's work, including the growth of our training function, and

also come under the SNAICC National Executive.

There are also new rules that support SNAICC's current application for Deductible Gift Recipient status. The new documents are the product of a long, six-month process of drafting and redrafting. SNAICC, the National Executive and lawyers have had considerable input and discussion into what changes should be made, making sure that both the



intent of SNAICC's old constitution is kept and all legal requirements are met.

SNAICC acknowledges the significant assistance of Arnold Bloch Leibler Lawyers and SNAICC volunteer Jelmer Procee, who kindly gave their time and resources.

See the new SNAICC constitution & Statement of Purposes on www.snaicc.asn.au/aboutus



Back: Sara Rosandich Apunipima, Maree Laverth MLM Roma, Bubs Davis Mt Isa QIFVLS, Klem Rosandich Apunipima, Rodney Dockrik QIFVLS Cairns, Dave Peters QIFVLS Mt Isa, Bernard Sabadi Wuchopperan; Middle: Andrea Barry Bravehearts, Joh-Ann Coates QIFVLS Cairns, Jasmine Alloway QIFVLS Cairns, Christine Buckland Mt Isa QIFVLS, Annette Peters HYFVPLS RTON, Catherine McQuillan MLM St George, Rosie Elliott SNAICC; Front: Catriona Elek SNAICC, Delwyn Sellin QIFVLS Cairns, Isobel Jones HYFVPLS TVLLE, Leonie Wovot HYFVPLS RTON, Marie Yamashita QIFVLS Cairns, Topsy Tapim QIFVLS TSV

Through Young Black Eyes workshop at QIFVLS, Cairns

Rosie and Catriona from SNAICC flew to beautiful Cairns in late May to run a two day workshop on the *Through Young Black Eyes Workshop Kit*. The workshop was funded by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, and co-hosted by Bernard Sabadi from Wuchopperen Health Service in Cairns.

Seventeen people attended from services from northern and western Queensland, including from the Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service (who hosted the workshop), Mt Isa Family Support and Neighbourhood House, Bravehearts, and Apunipima Cape York Health Service.

Over two days we covered a whole kit together, sharing the ideas, and running some of the activities it includes. Bernard Sabadi (Wuchopperan) and Leonie Wovot (Helem Yumba FVLPS in Rockhampton) shared their own wonderful handbook adaptations from the workshop kit. Bernard

said 'It was a bit daunting at first, to put together our own workshop, but on looking at the *Through Young Black Eyes Workshop Kit* I saw there were a few parts I could choose from. We could just take out the bits we wanted and make a handbook and resources for our own workshop on family violence.' It was inspiring work, Bernard and Leonie. Congratulations!

Everyone then discussed how they could use and adapt the materials to help create child safe communities in their own areas.

It was great to get to know such a committed group over two days. The talk and energy arising was powerful for all these front line workers, and for also for SNAICC staff to be affirmed in their work. SNAICC hopes to hold more workshops such as these in other areas in the future, as well as to get back to Cairns to catch up again with how each participant is getting along.

Contact: jane@snaicc.asn.au
or rosie@snaicc.asn.au



Leonie Wovot (Helem Yumba FVLPS) and Bernard Sabadi (Wuchopperan), with Leonie showing off her beautiful, fluorescent *Not Now, Not Then, Not Ever* T-shirt they used in their own program.



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For *SNAICC News* inquiries contact:

Editor: Rosie Elliott
publications@snaicc.asn.au
Tel: 03 9489 8099
PO Box 1445, Fitzroy North, Victoria 3068



Aboriginal Children's Self Publishing Workshop Kit

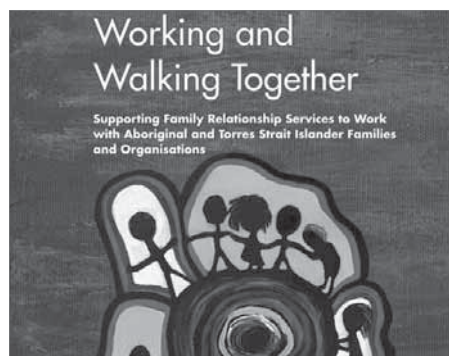
Pre-order by end of September for 35% off.

A kit to assist in the planning and running of a Children's Self Publishing workshop in an Early Childhood service. The kit contains:

- A 30 page Children's Self Publishing guide in simple-to-follow language.
- A short DVD featuring interviews with workshop participants and demonstrating how to create simple books.
- Two examples of published books created using Self Publishing methods,
- Two 'hotdog' books.

Self Publishing methods are ideal for creating local resources and can be used for any community project.

\$65 (incl. postage & GST)
\$40 only until 30 September
See web site for order form details.



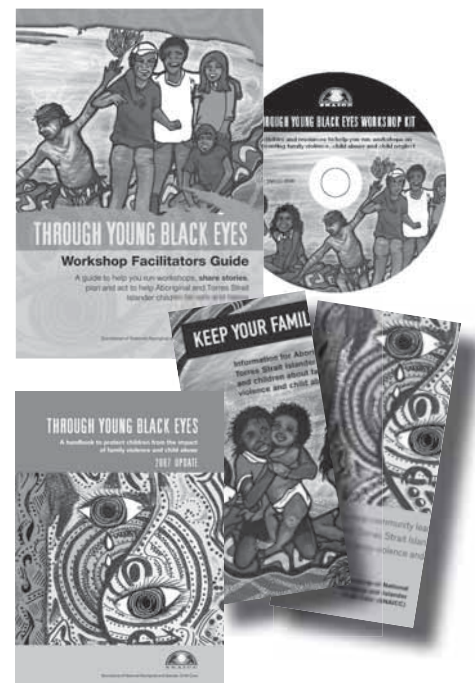
Working & Walking Together

Supporting Family Relationships Services to Work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Families and Organisations. Full colour, 176-page A4, wire-bound publication, featuring background information, helpful tips and principles for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and organisations, case studies, and a listing of useful resources. \$38 plus \$7 postage.



Talking Up Our Strengths

22 theme based photomontage cards celebrating the strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, both urban and remote, past and present. A resource designed to promote conversations about keeping strong in culture and in cross cultural dialogue. \$42.50 plus \$6.50 postage.



Through Young Black Eyes

Resources to help you develop child safe communities and protect children from the impact of family violence and child abuse. These resources include a workshop kit, facilitators guide, information handbook, leaders guide and pamphlets. \$110 (incl. postage & GST)



In my family we are proud to be Nunga

Family is about togetherness, pride in heritage and support for one another. Families spend time camping, fishing, singing and playing sport. Families are welcoming.

A new 16 page full colour A5 book for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Art and text for created by workers from South Australian early childhood Aboriginal services who participated in a SNAICC Children's Self Publishing Workshop. Order online for \$17 for ten copies plus \$3 postage.

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