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# Kimberley Schools Aboriginal Culture Program Mapping Project - Data and Analysis Report

2019

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By Maya Haviland with Brad Riley & Ben  
Houghton

Centre for Heritage and Museum Studies  
College of Arts and Social Sciences  
Australian National University



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2019 Maya Haviland, Brad Riley & Ben Houghton

Kimberley Schools Aboriginal Culture Program  
Mapping Project Report Data & Analysis Report  
2019

Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre  
&  
The Centre for Heritage and Museum Studies  
Research School of Humanities & the Arts  
College of Arts and Social Sciences  
Australian National University

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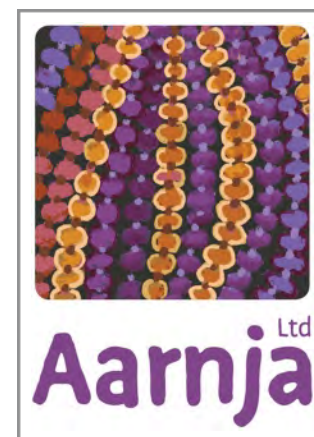
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# Summary of Findings

**The Kimberley Schools Aboriginal Culture Program Mapping Project involved an online/phone survey of Kimberley schools and qualitative research with targeted schools undertaking local Aboriginal cultural programs in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. The data collection for the research was undertaken between June 2018-March 2019.**

**64% of all schools in the Kimberley (28 of the 44) participated in the survey. A total of 8 schools participated in case study interviews, with 6 case studies included in this report. 86% of survey respondents were school Principals or deputy Principals. 82% of respondents had worked in the Kimberley for more than 5 years and 32% for 10 years or more. 71% of surveyed schools have an Aboriginal student population of more than 95%, with only one participating school reporting an Aboriginal student population of less than 20%.**

## School-based Aboriginal culture programs in the Kimberley

**89% (25/28) of surveyed Kimberley schools reported currently running some form of school-based Aboriginal cultural program.**

**Schools attributed a range of meanings to the term ‘Aboriginal culture programs’.** Responses ranged from daily or weekly language and culture learning activities run for the whole of the school, on Country camps and participation in community events by some or all students, to one-off events such as NAIDOC week celebrations, or a combination of all of these. **Aboriginal Language programs were most commonly reported as the primary ‘school-based Aboriginal culture program’, with 71% of surveyed schools reporting running a Language program based on an Aboriginal language.**

The high number of schools teaching Aboriginal culture primarily through Aboriginal language programs is likely a result of policy and WA and Australian curriculum frameworks that support language teaching, including some access to funding and training for Aboriginal language teachers in Western Australia. **This research found that surveyed schools generally find it more challenging to resource and incorporate aspects of Aboriginal culture other than language into their school curriculum.** Some schools reported the dynamics of negotiating what language(s) should and can be taught posed significant challenges to establishing and sustaining Language programs, especially for schools based in larger town sites. **Most school-based culture programs identified through this research include activities outside of school ground and school hours.**

## Who runs and supports school-based Aboriginal culture programs in the Kimberley?

**Aboriginal education support staff (AEO’s, AEW’s and ATAs) were identified by the majority of survey respondents as the school’s primary cultural advisors and often referred to as the driving force behind school-based Aboriginal culture programs.**

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School culture programs which rely on Aboriginal school staff as the primary cultural advisors can encounter challenges due to the dynamics of cultural authority and legitimacy of Aboriginal school staff to speak for or teach about local cultural knowledge. These dynamics are not always clear to non-Indigenous staff who may not understand the specifics of kinship and cultural connections of their Aboriginal colleagues, nor the complex politics of local cultural groups.

**There is a spectrum of approaches to formalising the role of Aboriginal people in the running of schools in the Kimberley, and in the design and running of school-based Aboriginal cultural activities and programs specifically.**

- Only three schools surveyed mentioned formal groups whose specific role is the development of school-based Aboriginal culture and language programs.
- Only a small number of schools reported having a dedicated culture or language co-ordinator and these roles are usually not stand-alone full-time positions. It is worth noting that not all people designated as culture program coordinators in Kimberley schools are Indigenous.
- A significant challenge for schools seeking to include local Aboriginal culture and language in their school curriculum is how these activities link to the mainstream curriculum. Case studies show that schools with staff with designated roles supporting efforts to connect Aboriginal cultural activities and programs to classroom curriculum are more successful in doing so.

**This research found that there are some notable differences between the different school sectors in the Kimberley, for example:**

- All surveyed independent schools report having an Aboriginal advisory and/or governance body connected with the school.
- Only half of the Catholic schools surveyed reported having an Aboriginal advisory, reference group or governing body, and all but one participating Catholic school said that they relied on their Aboriginal Teacher Assistants as their primary consultants regarding Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal cultural activities.
- More than three quarters (78.5%) of the state schools surveyed indicated that they have some form of Aboriginal advisory and/or governance body, however the specifics varied.

## Perceived benefits and motivations of school-based Aboriginal culture programs

**A number of research participants highlighted the perceived value of local Aboriginal cultural programs and activities in facilitating student participation and engagement with mainstream education frameworks.**

School culture programs in the Kimberley are perceived by survey participants to:

- strengthen student engagement with literacy and numeracy through providing locally relevant contexts to engage with these skills, such as through making and reading books about local culture.

- 
- provide opportunities for students to participate in alternative forms of learning, and to demonstrate skills different from those based in conventional classroom and academically focused activities, and make school more appealing to kids who become disengaged from more academically structured activities.
  - re-position Aboriginal staff from being educational support staff to being teachers and educational leaders.
  - build cultural awareness, competency and sensitivity of non-Indigenous school staff.
  - Contribute to cultural safety, relevance and accessibility of Kimberley schools for Aboriginal students and their families.
  - validate local Aboriginal community members histories and cultures
  - support non-Indigenous school staff to fill gaps in their knowledge of the local area.

## Budgets and Funding

**Budgets and funding for school-based Aboriginal culture in the Kimberley reported by survey respondents varied greatly, with annual budgets between \$1000-5000 in State and Catholics schools to up \$30,000 in some independent schools.**

**A number of Catholic or State schools currently running school-based Aboriginal culture programs do not have a specific budget pool allocated to these programs.**

## Knowledge of other school-based Aboriginal culture programs, past and present

**There is limited awareness from survey respondents of other Aboriginal culture programs being run across the region now or in the past. This research showed there is a lack of consistent mechanisms in any of the school sectors in the Kimberley to manage handover of culturally oriented practice, relationships and knowledge when school leadership changes, or in sharing good practice in implementing school-based Aboriginal culture programs. This is having a significant impact on the capacity for such programs to grow in scope, scale, reach and effectiveness.**

## Challenges

A significant challenge for schools running, establishing and sustaining school-based Aboriginal culture programs in the Kimberley is a lack of dedicated resources available across all sectors. Necessary resources include far more than just funding. Key challenges identified in this research include:

- Accessing and sharing of learning materials and tools for teaching specific languages and cultures;
- Lack of support for training of staff and community members to implement cultural activities and cultural curriculums;

- 
- Lack of specific coordination and support of cultural programming and linking activities to the mainstream curriculum.
  - Time, in both school timetables and in the schedules of key school staff and community members involved in school-based culture programs
  - Reliance on endorsement of Principals
  - High staff turnover
  - Ensuring regular time and space for local Aboriginal culture in the regular school curriculum and timetable
  - Lack of coordination between schools working with the same language and cultural groups
  - Access to consistent and flexible funding
  - Regulatory and logistical challenges
  - Issues with Community Engagement
  - integrating specific pedagogical programs currently being implemented regionally in the Kimberley, such as direct and explicit instruction models, with school-based local Aboriginal culture programs.

**There are no dedicated structures and few opportunities for school staff and community members involved in school-based Aboriginal culture programs in the Kimberley to connect with each other to share good practice, tools, learning and resources.**

## Success Factors

This research has identified a range of factors which contribute to the strength and sustainability of school-based local Aboriginal culture programs in the Kimberley. These include:

- Collaboration by school staff with community and cultural knowledge holders
- Empowerment and training of Aboriginal Staff within Kimberley schools
- Endorsement and support of culturally oriented programs and activities from Principals
- Building Indigenous school leadership
- Strong integration of local Aboriginal culture into the curriculum and school
- Ensuring consistency in cultural program delivery
- Building cultural competency of non-Indigenous staff
- Structural changes to support school-based Aboriginal culture programs

Schools who are successfully implementing school-based Aboriginal culture programs in the Kimberley have made a range of structural changes to do so. These include:

- Ensuring dedicated resources are available to support linkages between culture/language activities and curriculum

- 
- Formalising and communicating Aboriginal culture programs as a curriculum priority in the school
  - Resourcing and sustaining dedicated culture program coordinator roles or a culture leadership team
  - Explicit commitment from school leadership to valuing and embedding local culture as a core part of school values
  - Dedicated time in both school timetables and in staff roles for culture programming
  - Dedicated physical space in the school for teaching Aboriginal language and culture

## Gaps and opportunities

Through this research we have a unique insight into the policy, cultural and curriculum frameworks which support existing school-based local Aboriginal culture programs, the gaps in current practice and support for such programs, and the opportunities to strengthen school/culture interfaces in the Kimberley. Supporting frameworks include the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority, the Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Island Languages Framework and the employment of Aboriginal teaching and education support staff across the schools sectors operating in the Kimberley. There are a range of other supporting frameworks and approaches within each of the 3 school sectors.

There are several emerging policy opportunities to grow and strengthen school-based local Aboriginal cultural programs in the Kimberley region, most significantly the WA's recently stated orientation towards culturally based programs, partnerships between local Aboriginal communities and service providers (such as schools), and intent to build upon successful initiatives developed at local levels, as articulated in the WA Government Statement of Intent on Aboriginal Youth Suicide (May 2019). A key opportunity lies in the intention of the WA Government to create a WA Aboriginal Cultural Policy and Aboriginal Affairs Strategy, which could respond to the gaps and opportunities to strengthen and grow school-based local Aboriginal cultural programs in the Kimberley identified in this research.

These gaps/opportunities include the need for:

- Networking and peer support opportunities for local staff implementing culture and language programs across Kimberley schools
- Strengthening local Indigenous leadership within Kimberley schools through cultural governance and an emphasis on Aboriginal people contributing to curriculum development and approaches to teaching and learning about local cultures
- Cultural orientation for new non-local school staff in all Kimberley schools run from a cultural point of view
- Training and support on approaches to teaching and learning local Aboriginal culture and language for Kimberley people, especially to support cultural knowledge holders to teach in structured environments
- Archiving and sharing of local Aboriginal culture and language resources across communities and schools in the Kimberley
- Building networks between schools and local Aboriginal groups and organisations that are developing cultural knowledge with young people in the Kimberley

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# 1

## Background and Context

### Introduction and Context

This research occurred at a particular moment in time in 2018/19. As of May 2019 93.5% of the land of the Kimberley was under native title\*. The Royalties for Regions scheme was funding the 25 million dollar Kimberley Schools Project based around models of direct instruction, signing up 10 of the 44 schools in the Kimberley in 2018#. And youth suicide had hit such a crisis point that a coronial inquest was held into the deaths of 13 young people, publishing its findings in February 2019 \*\*.

Recommendation 7 of the Inquest into the 13 Deaths of Children and Young Persons in the Kimberley Region was “that Western Australian Government agencies recognise the importance of cultural knowledge as a protective factor preventing Aboriginal youth suicide”. Recommendation 38 was “that the Department of Education introduce or continue to expand the teaching of Aboriginal languages in its Kimberley schools, in consultation with the local Aboriginal communities”. Recommendation 39 suggests “That the Yiriman Project or a model akin to the Yiriman Project be linked to schools within the Kimberley region.”## These recommendations, and the Western

\*<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/may/24/the-kimberley-is-now-935-native-title-but-indigenous-victory-is-bittersweet>

# <https://regionalservicesreform.wa.gov.au/pr/kimberley-schools-project>

\*\*[https://www.coronerscourt.wa.gov.au/1/inquest\\_into\\_the\\_13\\_deaths\\_of\\_children\\_and\\_young\\_persons\\_in\\_the\\_kimberley\\_region.aspx](https://www.coronerscourt.wa.gov.au/1/inquest_into_the_13_deaths_of_children_and_young_persons_in_the_kimberley_region.aspx)

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Australian Governments recently Statement of Intent on Aboriginal Youth Suicide, released in May 2019### recognise the critical importance of cultural knowledge to support the wellbeing of young Aboriginal people in the Kimberley, and the role that schools are perceived by many to have in supporting such an approach to youth wellbeing.

The role of schools in supporting and facilitating the teaching and learning of Aboriginal cultures and languages has rich, layered and contested histories in the Kimberley region, in Western Australia more broadly, and across northern Australia. These layers map the ebb and flow of projects and programs in line with the ebb and flow of pedagogical philosophies, educational, cultural and regional policies.

The histories of the relationships between formal schooling and Aboriginal cultural transmission and practice have not been easy or without tensions. They form part of the multifaceted and diverse personal and regional histories of culture, teaching and learning of Aboriginal people from the Kimberley and WA. These diverse histories in turn shape attitudes and

relationships to schooling, education and learning for current and future generations in complex ways. What is ‘normal’ in school differs widely across time and geography as do the metrics of educational success.

## Motivation for this study

Although acknowledging the long and layered histories of Aboriginal culture and formal schooling in the Kimberley, this research has not sought to investigate the history of school-based Aboriginal cultural programs and learning in the region. Rather this research report aims to provide a snapshot, based on new data, of what roles schools in the Kimberley understand themselves to have in supporting the teaching and learning of local Aboriginal cultures and languages at the time of the study (2018/19), and to profile some examples of how these projects and practices work on the ground.

##The Yiriman Project is a long standing project supported by the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre that supports cultural learning for young people in the Kimberley region through connection with elders and country.

###<https://www.dpc.wa.gov.au/ProjectsandSpecialEvents/Documents/Statement-of-Intent-Aboriginal-youth-suicide.pdf>

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## The Kimberley Caring for Culture Project

This research was commissioned by the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre (KALACC) as a part of the broader Kimberley Caring for Culture project – which has sought to investigate how Aboriginal culture is being supported by organisations across the Kimberley region. The Kimberley Aboriginal Caring for Culture Project is part of KALACC's effort to improve resource distribution, foster a collaborative approach between Aboriginal organisations and Governments, and to address the broader impact of intergenerational trauma and suicide in the Kimberley region.

The Kimberley Caring for Culture Project objectives are to:

- Map and gap the current service provision
- Foster collaboration and cohesion amongst Kimberley Aboriginal Non-Government Organisation (NGO) service providers
- Contribute to the development of macro Government policies and strategies
- Contribute to important research into and strategies towards improving Indigenous outcomes

The Kimberley Caring for Culture Project has completed a year-long consultation processes with Aboriginal organisations across the Kimberley resulting in the The Kimberley Caring for Culture Consultation Report 1.1 (June 2019). This report presents a summary of consultations with 61 Aboriginal organisations from across the Kimberley region. It showcases the culturally-based activities, partnerships, achievements and aspirations of Aboriginal organisation in the Kimberley including cultural and arts centres; language centres; men's and women's centres; native title bodies and organisations; rangers & Indigenous protected areas; health organisations & programs; media organisations; cultural, youth & arts organisations; and, a range of other service providers and supporting organisations.

## The Kimberley Schools Aboriginal Culture Program Mapping Project

In designing the Kimberley Caring for Culture Project, schools were recognized as being uniquely positioned. It was therefore decided to undertake a specific research project looking at the roles schools are playing in fostering local Aboriginal cultural knowledge and

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practices through school-based programs and activities in the Kimberley.

The Kimberley Schools Aboriginal-Culture Program Mapping Project complements the Kimberley Caring for Culture Consultation Report 1.1. Together these two pieces of research will inform the forthcoming Kimberley Caring for Culture Plan, which aims to provide a framework with culture at its core for Government and other supporting organisations to develop future policies, practices and strategies relating to Aboriginal people in the Kimberley region.

## The Kimberley School Culture Program – a brief history of previous learning

This report and the research on which it draws has built on earlier work commissioned by the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre undertaken by Maya Haviland evaluating the Kimberley Schools Culture Program\*\*.

The Kimberley School Culture Program was a philanthropically funded initiative of KALACC to support targeted schools in the Kimberley to develop school-based local Aboriginal culture programs. It built the approach of a pioneering school culture program established in 2007 at One Arm Point Remote Community School in partnership with Bardi people. The project provided additional support to One Arm Point Remote Community School to continue its program, and supported two other Kimberley schools, Wulungarra Community School and Wangkatjunga Remote Community School, to establish local Aboriginal culture programs in collaboration with their local communities.

A 2-year evaluation was undertaken in 2010/11 looking at the outcomes of this program, released in November 2011.

The Kimberley School Culture Program was situated within the national focus on Aboriginal education, and the expression of national priorities to reverse Aboriginal

\*<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/cross-curriculum-priorities/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-histories-and-cultures/>

\*\*Haviland, Maya. "Kimberley Schools Culture Program Evaluation : Year Two Evaluation Report." 41. Fitzroy Crossing, WA: Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre; Side by Side Community Project Consulting, 2011.

#<https://k10outline.scsa.wa.edu.au/home/teaching/curriculum-browser/languages/ac-languages/ac-languages2/aboriginal-languages>

\*\*\*<https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/reports/closing-the-gap-2018/education.html>

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disadvantage in education, known now as the Closing the Gap agenda\*\*\*.

Evaluation of the Kimberley School Culture Program found a range of difference in approaches to school-based local Aboriginal programs in the 3 schools involved in the evaluation. These differences were based on size, staffing, and school sector (two schools were State schools, one was an independent school). It also found a number of issues that all three schools faced in their cultural programming and implementation, many of which are the same as challenges articulated by participants in this more recent and larger scale research. These challenges include:

- The significant investment of time and labour needed to build strong relationships with the local community and cultural knowledge holders.
  - The need to consider and strategically manage the relationship to teaching Aboriginal languages and other aspects of Aboriginal culture
  - A wide array of logistical challenges, especially related to cultural activities run off school grounds
  - The need to develop staff and community capacities to design, implement and teach in Aboriginal
- <sup>13</sup>cultural programs linked with the school

- How to best integrate cultural activities and content into the broader curriculum
- Sustaining Aboriginal culture programming when school staff, especially leadership, change
- The best role for non-Aboriginal people, and Aboriginal people not from the local cultural group
- How best to foster collaboration and two-way teaching approaches between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff

Despite many challenges faced by schools in Kimberley School Culture Program, the evaluation found that school-based local Aboriginal culture programs, when well-integrated into curriculum and supported by strong community participation, can contribute to literacy, make school more attractive and engaging to students, increasing school attendance, and build stronger links between the school and community members.

It also found that such programs helped non-Indigenous teachers to access cultural knowledge, making them more comfortable in Kimberley communities and helping them to adapt their teaching styles to local contexts.

The Kimberley School Culture Program two year evaluation made a range of recommendations in 2011 that are

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reinforced by the findings of this research in 2019. These included:

- That any school seeking to establish a School-based Aboriginal Culture Program establish an Aboriginal Language Program before or in conjunction with establishing a broader culture program.
- That schools implementing an Aboriginal culture program develop and implement a formal cultural induction process for school staff to be run a minimum of once a year
- That participants involved in implementing school based culture programs be supported to meet in a regional network at least on an annual basis
- That specific funding is provided to develop, archive and share cultural documentation materials for use in school culture and literacy programs.
- That an Aboriginal school culture program be trialed in one of the larger Kimberley schools to see how a program would work with a student body drawn from a wide range of cultural groups, including non-Aboriginal students.

The funding for the Kimberley Schools Culture Project ceased after the initial 2 year period. The evaluation research

undertaken in 2010/11 only looked at the projects funded by this project.

The Kimberley Caring for Culture Project has presented a valuable opportunity to revisit the actual and potential role that schools in the Kimberley have in supporting local Aboriginal culture and language teaching and learning. Through this project we have been able to take a broader view to look across the 3 school sectors (State or public; Catholic and Independent) in the Kimberley and create a base line picture of school-based Aboriginal culture programs in Kimberley schools in 2018/19.

It is hoped that this research can provide some insight into the ways in which such programs can be better supported in the future, through policy and practice at government and school sector policy levels; regional programs in the Kimberley; in the practices of individual schools and educators; and by cultural organisations and Aboriginal cultural knowledge holders in the Kimberley. This report provides examples of practice that can be shared by schools, policy makers and cultural practitioners to understand how school-based local Aboriginal cultural programs and activities have been and can be better implemented in specific contexts.

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# 2

## APPROACH

### Methodology of study

This research was designed to better understand the work that schools and local Aboriginal groups in the Kimberley are doing to support local Aboriginal cultural knowledge through school-based cultural activities and programs.

The goals of the research were to:

1. Identify what Aboriginal cultural activities and programs are happening in collaboration with Kimberley schools during the study period (July 2018-May 2019), including their goals, activities, structure and relationship to school curriculum.
2. Identify and gather information on examples of such programs that are considered effective by schools and local community members.
3. Understand the supporting and constraining factors for both school staff and administration and local Aboriginal community members in participating in school based cultural education projects and activities and how these can be better supported in the future.

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The research involved:

- An online/phone survey to gather baseline data on School-based Aboriginal Cultural education programs across the whole Kimberley region and identify potential case studies for face to face interviews and further research. (See appendix 1 for copies of the survey tool).
- Targeted case study research with across a spread of schools sectors, geography, size and cultural diversity. Case study methodology included face to face and phone interviews with targeted schools, and review of relevant documents and resources used by schools where appropriate.
- A limited review of literature was undertaken to contextualise the study and investigate relevant policy frameworks shaping school culture programs in the Kimberley during the study period.

## Funding & Research Approvals

Funding for this project has been provided to the ANU by the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre (KALACC), via their broader Caring for Culture Plan project. Funding for the KALACC Caring for Culture Project was provided by the

Commonwealth Suicide Prevention Trial, with resourcing allocated to the WA Primary Health Alliance. Further funding contributions were made by Aarnja Limited.

Human Research Ethics approval was gained from the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC ANU 2018/169) for this research in April 2018, and approval to undertake the research was gained from Catholic Education Western Australia in late May 2018. Approval for participation in the research by Independent schools was granted by individual school Principals and/or governing boards on a case by case basis. Research approval was granted by the Western Australian Department of Education in July 2018. KALACC provided a letter of endorsement for this research which was sent out as a part of the process of engaging schools and recruiting participants to the research (see appendix 3).

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# Tools and Methods

## Survey

The online survey was intended to identify and gather information on schools running Aboriginal culture programs, map the nature of these programs and identify possible case study sites.

A copy of the survey used in this study can be found in Appendix 1.

Survey questions were drafted by the ANU research team, and then circulated for feedback and amendment to KALACC staff, several Indigenous research advisors from or with experience working in the Kimberley, as well as to several other researchers working in Indigenous education in Australia. Following the peer review of survey questions Survey Monkey was used to create the survey.

The survey was implemented using two slightly different protocols. Catholic and independent schools were surveyed using a protocol in which schools were identified by name by respondents, whereas WA State schools were surveyed using a coding system to identify schools complying with the research protocol approved by WA Department of Education. The results gathered using the two online tools have

been amalgamated and can be treated as a single data set.

Schools that were unable or unwilling to complete the survey online undertook the survey with Dr Maya Haviland either face to face or over the phone, these results were then entered into the SurveyMonkey tool to create a complete data set.

## Participant recruitment and engagement

At the start of the research project in February 2018, 44 schools were identified in the Kimberley region, 7 Independent, 14 Catholic and 23 State Schools. All 44 schools in the Kimberley region were invited to participate in the online survey, through a letter and email to school Principals. Catholic and Independent schools were first invited to participate in June 2018, with State schools invited in late July and early August 2018.

Follow up invitations were sent to schools in all sectors who had not responded to the survey via email at three intervals between August and November 2018. Following the last round of email invitations in November 2018, schools who had still not responded were contacted by phone and extended a further invitation.

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The survey was closed on December 5th 2018.

3 schools could not be contacted by email or phone at any time during the research period. Of the 41 schools who were contacted through recruitment processes (93%), 2 declined to participate in the research, one because the community had a problematic relationship with KALACC and one for an unspecified reason. A number of schools said that they did not have the time or the capacity to participate in research due to commitments including the burden of new curriculum programs, compliance and reporting or low staff numbers. 11 schools indicated their intention to participate but did not complete the survey.

At the end of the survey period responses had been received from 28 of the 44 schools identified in the Kimberley, 4 Independent, 10 Catholic, and 14 State.

**The overall response rate to the survey was approximately 63% of all schools in the Kimberley.**

## Case studies

Potential case study sites were selected based on survey responses, knowledge of KALACC staff and colleagues in the Kimberley, and previous knowledge of

school culture programs in the region. Schools were primarily selected based on interesting or unique approaches to delivering school-based Aboriginal culture programs. An effort was made to select case study schools that represented a cross-section of the 3 school sectors in the Kimberley, geographic location (both remote and town based) and size (primary school only as well as High School), however logistics and research protocols limited a fully representative sample being included in selected case studies.

Contact with potential case study schools was made via email, followed by phone calls to arrange face to face interviews and site visits. See appendix 2 for Case Study invitation letters.

## Interviews

Two field trips to the Kimberley were undertaken as part of this study, one in June/July 2018 and a second in March 2019. Interviews were conducted in the East and West Kimberley in July/August 2018 by Dr Maya Haviland with assistance of Brad Riley. These included interviews with staff and representatives of 6 schools, including 2 state schools, 3 independent schools, and 1 Catholic School. Interviews were also conducted with a range of support and

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policy focused staff from across the 3 school sectors to gain a picture of the current policy context and frameworks underpinning school-based Aboriginal culture programs in the region. Further interviews and site visits with two state schools were undertaken in March 2019 by Brad Riley.

Interview questions were semi-structured, aiming to better understand the specific programs and approach to program delivery in the case study school.

Interviews were either audio recorded and then selectively transcribed, or were documented via written notes, depending on permissions from participants. A total of 8 schools participated in case study interviews, with 6 case studies included in this report.

Following approved research protocols Principals of schools participating in case study research were provided with a draft for correction and approval prior to publication of the research.

## Limitations of recruitment and research methods

In compliance with research protocols established by the Western Australian Department of Education recruitment of participants to this study (for both survey

and case study components) took place via school Principals. In general school Principals were supportive of participation in the research, but some declined to permit their school to participate in some aspects of the research (case study interviews for example) or all of the research, usually citing a high burden of research and compliance requests for their school and limited availability of staff time.

We draw attention to some of the limitations of this study. The primary limitation is that it is based largely on the perspectives of School Principals or Deputy Principals. Further, Principals chose who amongst their staff would be invited to participate in case study interviews and were often present during these interviews.

Aboriginal perspectives on programs described here were only provided by Aboriginal staff of relevant schools who were encouraged to participate by school Principals.

The data gathered and presented in this research, therefore, represents the opinions and experiences of those surveyed and interviewed. No attempt has been made to correct or verify this information through external sources.

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Students and community members not connected with a school were not invited to participate in this study, so the results presented here primarily represent the perspectives of school leadership.

Where schools are identified in this report it is with the approval of all related statements by the relevant School Principal.

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# 3

## Survey Results

This section outlines the findings from the survey research, divided into 8 sections.

1. Who Responded to the Survey?
2. School-based Aboriginal culture programs
3. Culture programs based on an Aboriginal language teaching and learning
4. Who runs and supports school-based Aboriginal culture programs in the Kimberley?
5. Linking Aboriginal culture and language activities to the mainstream curriculum
6. Why do schools implement Aboriginal culture programs? Perceived benefits and motivations
7. Budgets and Funding
8. Knowledge of other school-based Aboriginal culture programs, past and present

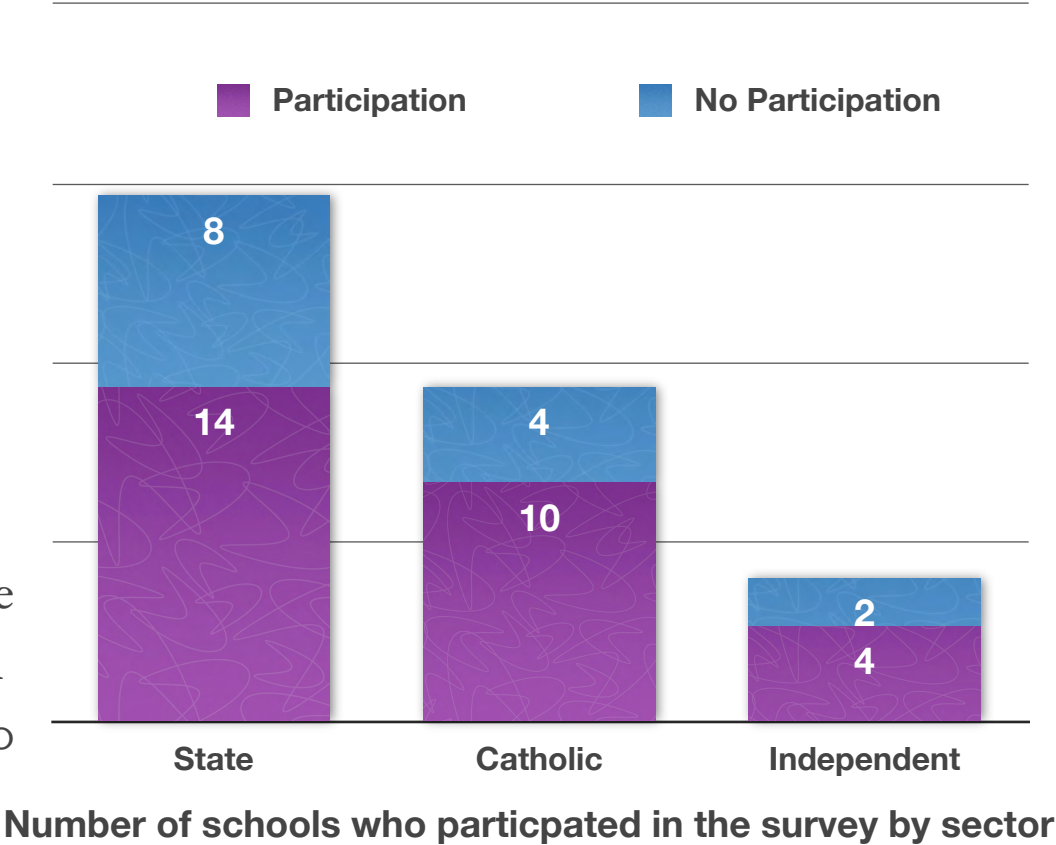
Please note:

- Only one response from each school is presented in the data.
- All schools who participated in case studies also participated in the survey.
- Data from the survey is generally referenced by survey question number (Q1) for ease of reference (see appendix 1). Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

# Who responded to the survey?

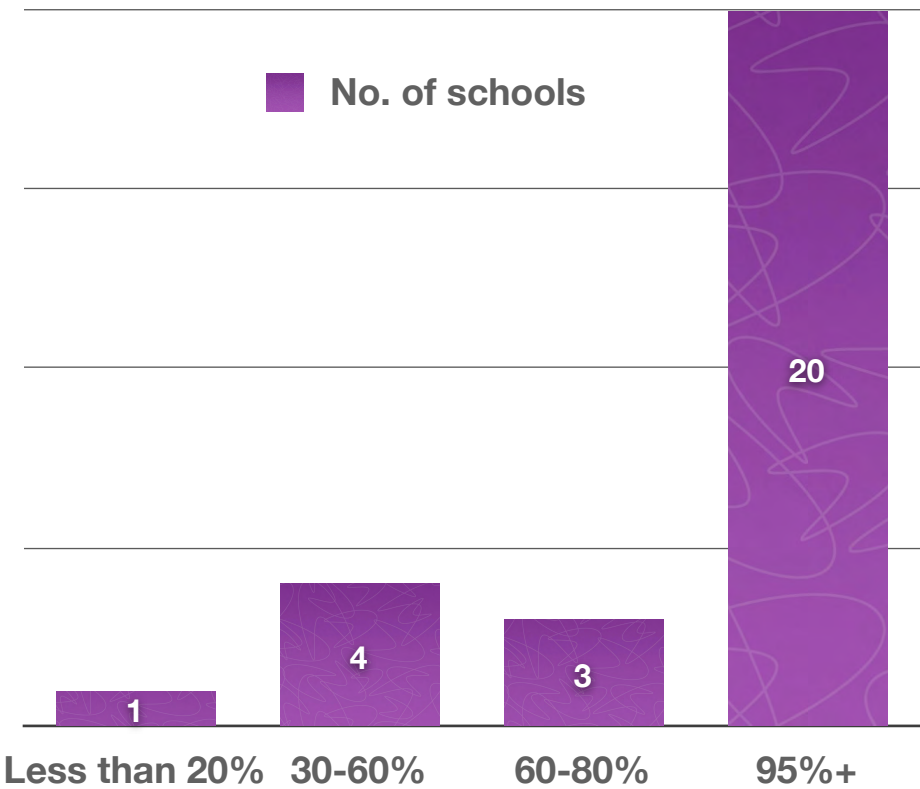
## Participating School Demographics

Survey responses were received from 28 of the 44 schools identified in the Kimberley – an engagement rate of 64%. The 28 schools who took part in the survey were comprised of 14 State, 10 Catholic and 4 Independent.



71% of schools who participated in the survey reported that more than 95% of their student population are Aboriginal, with only one school reporting an Aboriginal student population of less than 20%.

Percentage of Aboriginal students in surveyed schools



# Demographics of survey respondents

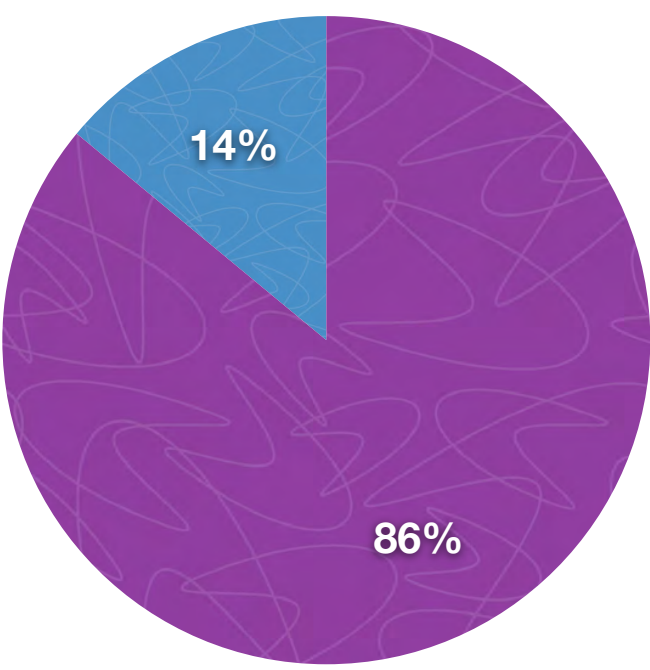
86% of respondents to the survey were either Principal or Deputy Principal of their school. **82% of respondents have worked in the Kimberley for more than 5 years and 32% for 10 years or more.**

Most respondents to the survey were either the Principal (79%) or Deputy Principal (7%) of the school, with a few responses coming from teachers, administration staff or unspecified (14%).

**64% of respondents said they have worked in other Kimberley schools prior to their current position.**

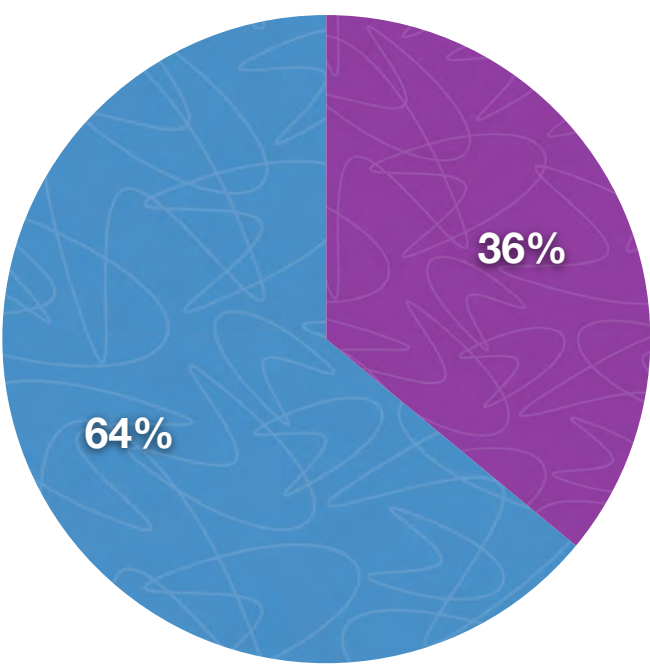
The high number of responses from senior staff, in both position and time spent working in schools in the Kimberley is notable. We believe the survey responses represent a good picture of the perceptions of school leaders at the time of the research.

Position of respondent



- Principal/Deputy Principal
- Teacher/Admin or other

Position on respondent



- No
- Yes

Respondents who have worked in more than one Kimberley school

# School-based Aboriginal culture programs in the Kimberley

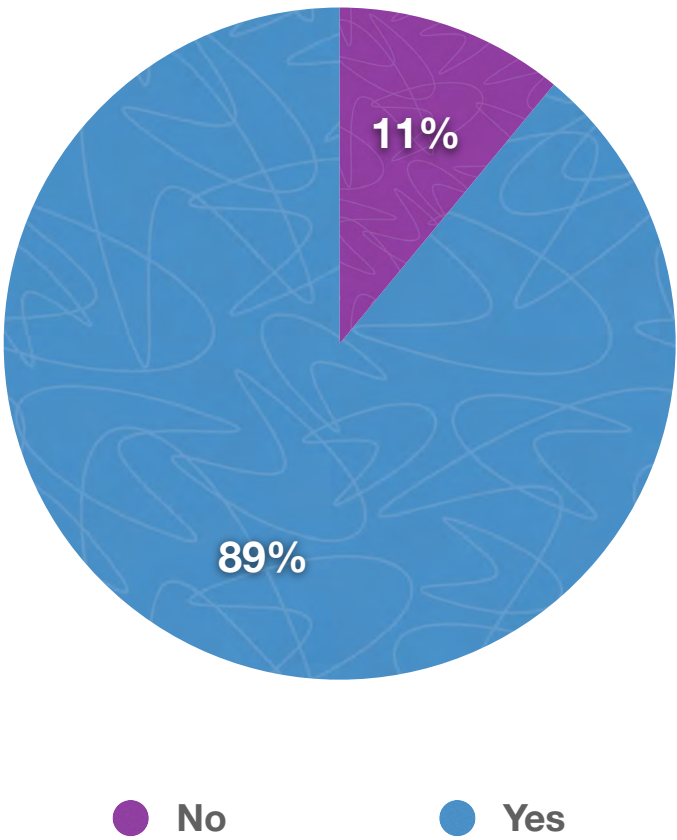
**25 out of 28 surveyed Kimberley schools (89%) reported that their school is currently running an school-based Aboriginal cultural program.** The three surveyed schools (11% of respondents) that are not currently running school-based Aboriginal culture programs report having run programs in the past that are no longer active\*. Based on the pattern of response to the survey we have notde the likelihood that schools who consider themselves most active as regards school-based Aboriginal culture programs were more likely to choose to respond to the survey than schools who are not currently active in this area.

## What do schools understand as Aboriginal culture programs?

The survey data collected indicates that what Kimberley schools recognise as Aboriginalculture programs varies greatly, in terms of form, frequency and focus.

\*The three schools who said that they are not currently running culture programs and one school that is running culture programs did not respond to the last half of the survey (Q32 onwards). These four 'no responses' are recorded in the data that follows where appropriate.

Surveyed schools running an Aboriginal Culture Program



**Schools attributed a range of meanings to the term ‘Aboriginal culture programs’ in their survey responses. These ranged from daily or weekly language and culture learning activities run for the whole**

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**of the school or in separate year groups, on Country camps and participation in community events by some or all of the students in the school, one-off events throughout the year such as NAIDOC week celebrations, or a combination of all of these.**

A few schools included programs aimed at improving general Indigenous education and Indigenous wellbeing within their responses to questions about the nature of 'Aboriginal culture programs'.

The diversity of responses offers a picture of the wide range of understanding about what Aboriginal culture programs in schools are or might become.

Most schools identified Aboriginal language teaching and learning through Language programs as the primary type of Aboriginal culture activity run by their school. Many schools also talked about broader culture activities run as part of or in addition to Aboriginal language programs. These included on Country excursions, camps and learning; cooking; handicrafts; dance; learning local and regional history; participating or observing law ceremonies; and, other non-language specific forms of cultural learning. Many schools also reported that they run on Country excursions or camps as culture

programs, with participation from rangers, elders and community members.

It is important to take into account the large variation of meanings that 'school-based Aboriginal culture programs' have for Kimberley schools when examining the data gathered in this survey, particularly in regard to location, organisation, funding and structure of programs identified as 'school-based'. A few schools who report running school-based Aboriginal culture programs do so only during specific events like NAIDOC week or reconciliation week.

Another form of culture program that was regularly mentioned were projects or activities run by external providers, such as engagement with Indigenous ranger groups and other Aboriginal organisations (see Section 4 for more detail on specific groups and organisations). On Country, bush trips and Caring for Country programs were also frequently mentioned, some involving rangers, elders and community members.

School based culture programs were also talked about by several schools as including specific Aboriginal culture and history topic and content areas being incorporated into standard curriculum. For example, in describing their approach to 'school-based Aboriginal culture programs'

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two schools reported having overhauled their standard Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) curriculum, structuring it around Aboriginal narratives of history, law and culture.

Almost all surveyed schools reported that their culture programs centred on language, Aboriginal Language programs as their primary ‘school-based Aboriginal culture program’ or activity. Culture was often mentioned as part of language education (i.e. Language & Culture programs).

Schools also frequently report running one-off programs for special events like NAIDOC week, Reconciliation week or sport days.

For a few schools culture programs are embedded in the events of the community and students visit culturally significant sites, attend funerals, Law and other community cultural events as part of their cultural education.

Everyday language immersion was also mentioned by a number of schools. Strategies reported by schools include morning prayers or assembly in local Aboriginal language, signs and the naming of rooms/areas using local Aboriginal

language and encouraging students to speak their native language or Kriol.

## Student, Family and Community Participation

All schools who responded to questions 39, 40 and 41\* (24/28 respondents) said that all students participate in school based Aboriginal culture programs and that family, friends and other community members are welcome and encouraged to participate in both classroom programs, special cultural events and excursions.

\*Q39 Do all students in the school participate in school-based Aboriginal cultural programs?

Q40 Can students’ families participate in school based Aboriginal cultural activities in your school?

\*Q41 Are community members (other than student’s family members) able to participate or attend school based Aboriginal cultural activities in your school?

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# Frequency, location and duration of Culture Programs\*

## Location

**For most school-based culture programs do not only take place within school grounds and during school hours.**

Most schools who are running Aboriginal culture programs reported their programs include taking students to culturally significant sights and local cultural events as well as running on Country programs, excursions and camps. Going on Country or on Bush trips was by far the most consistently mentioned activity that took place outside the school grounds. The frequency of activities that are run off school premises varies. For some schools, especially some independent schools, the school is the centre of the community so cultural activities are embedded in the school in ways that don't fall within a structured program.

## Hours

**“Sometimes it is not possible to get the best educational outcomes during school hours”**

79% of schools reported running culture programs at least once a week\*\*, and nearly half of these schools report running some form of Aboriginal culture program everyday.

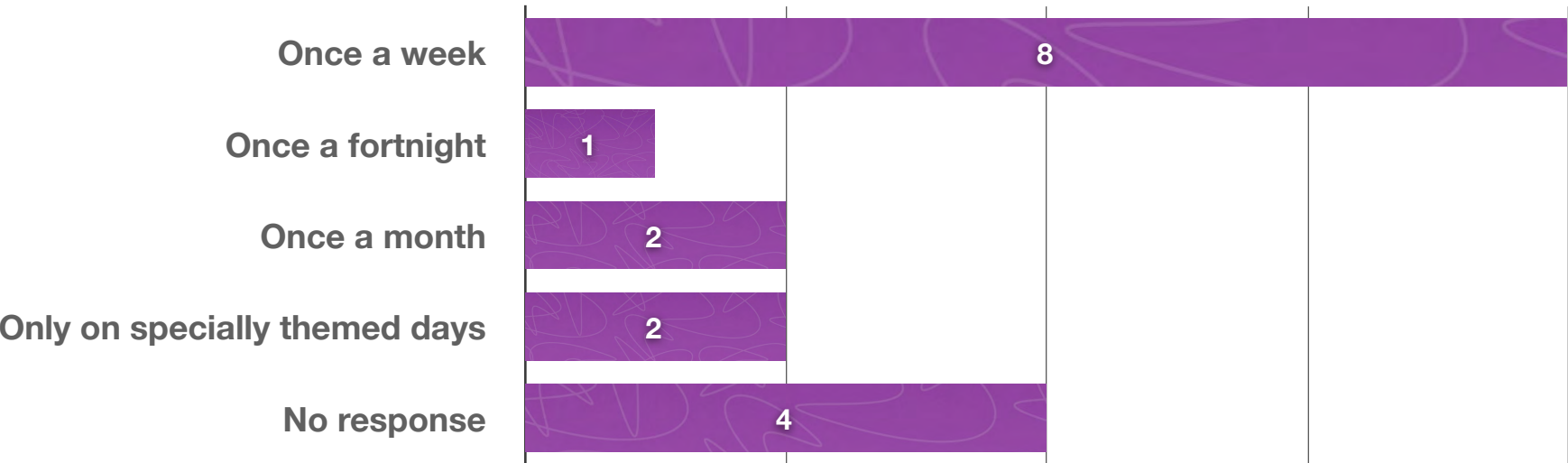
The average duration of culture programs was 1 hour, although most Catholic schools that responded to this question reported running programs for 1 – 2 hours.

\*The following discussion draws from responses to the following questions: Q32 Please describe the kinds of school-based Aboriginal cultural activities or programs currently run in your school; Q42 Does your school have school based Aboriginal cultural programs or activities designed for specific student or year groups?; Q43 Do all school-based Aboriginal Culture programs occur on the school premises; Q44 Do all activities occur during normal school hours?

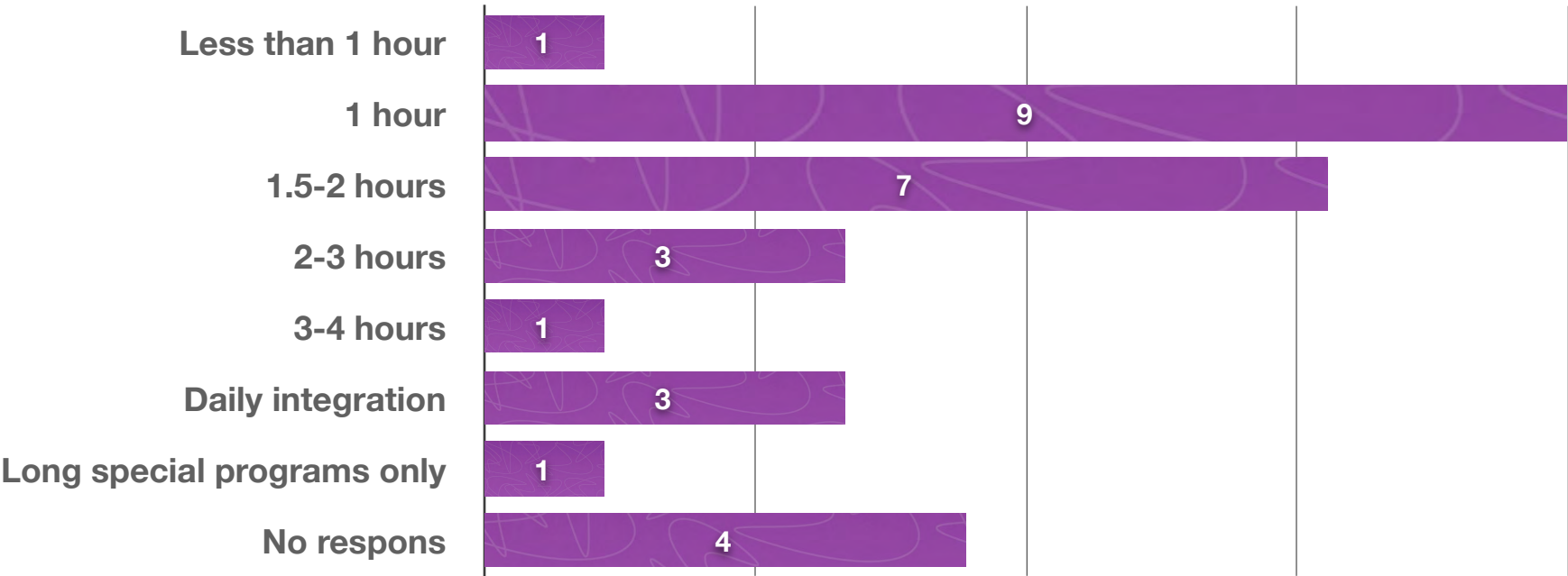
\*\*Programs mentioned by schools in this question include everyday integration of language and culture in school life and mainstream curriculum as well as scheduled culture and language classes. Also included in respondents' comments were cultural activities or programs run by non-school organisations as well as on country learning.

# “Culture and language are not set by white man clock”

Frequency of school-based culture programs by number of schools



Average duration of Aboriginal Culture Programs in surveyed schools

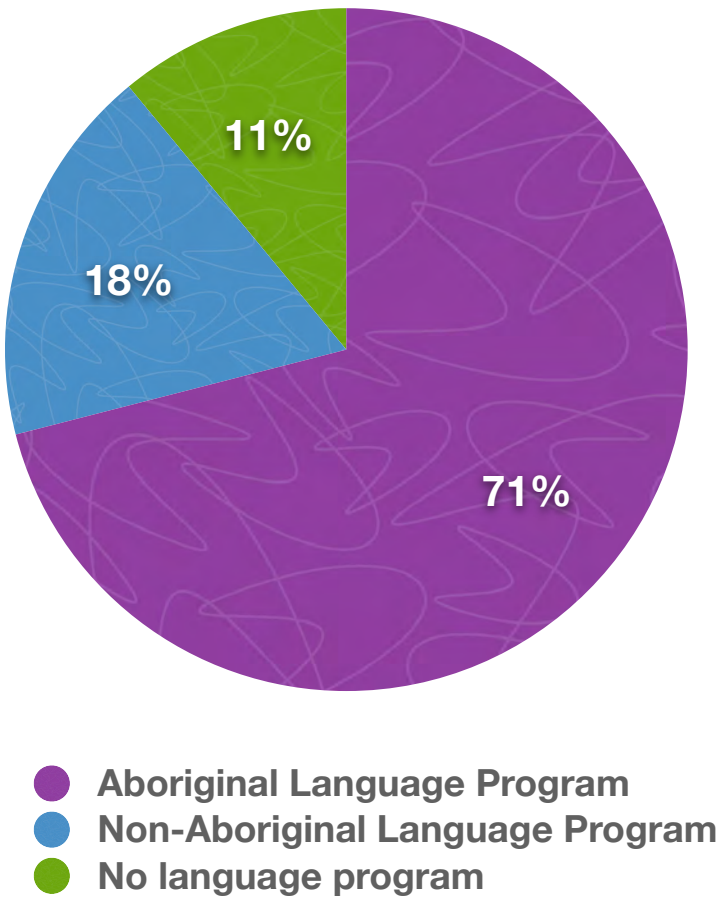


# Culture programs based on teaching and learning an Aboriginal language

Throughout both survey responses and case studies the key aspect of cultural learning and culture programs in Kimberley schools involved learning Aboriginal languages. **71% of schools reported that they run a Language program based on an Aboriginal language.** The high number of schools teaching Aboriginal culture primarily through Aboriginal language programs is likely a result of policy and curriculum frameworks that provide relatively extensive frameworks and support for language teaching, including some access to funding and training for language teachers.

It appears that schools find it more challenging to resource and incorporate aspects of Aboriginal culture other than language into the school curriculum.

Surveyed schools running language programs



\*Q9 survey respondents who answered yes to having a Language program based on an Aboriginal language were asked to name the languages taught (Some schools teach multiple Aboriginal languages).

# Community Language and Culture Dynamics

While language programs are the commonest way for schools to incorporate Aboriginal culture in the curriculum, **the cultural and political dynamics of negotiating what language(s) should and can be taught can be challenging.**

For schools located in communities with multiple Aboriginal languages currently spoken, and multiple language groups traditionally linked to the location of the school, such as several town sites in the Kimberley, there can be particular challenges for schools seeking to structure and deliver language and culture programs.

Some schools, as indicated in the survey data on the content of Language programs, navigate this by teaching more than one Aboriginal language. Other schools defer to the recognised Traditional Owner group granted native title over the community in which the school is located. These schools report occasionally having to negotiate with parents of students in their school who do not want their child learning a language to which they do not have a family connection.

Aboriginal languages taught in surveyed schools*	Number of schools
Walmajarri	4
Gooniyandi	4
Yawuru	2
Jaru	2
Baardi/Bardi	2
Kija/Gija	2
Kwini	1
Gogodja	1
Miriwoong	1
Karajarri, Nyangumarta, Yulparija, Juwaliny, Mangala	1
Kriol*	1
Unspecified	2

The work to seek agreement within the school and the broader community about what Aboriginal language could or should be taught can take a long time, and is often framed by broader politics and processes (such as Native Title processes, or whether there are suitable people to be able to teach a specific language).

**Some schools reported having spent several years involved in discussions with community groups and members to reach agreement on what Aboriginal language should be taught,** sometimes using the mechanisms of negotiating school/community partnership

\*One State school listed Kriol as one of the languages taught in their Language program. It is unclear if Kriol is actually taught as part of a formal Language program or if the respondent misread the question.

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agreements to support these processes. In one case a school said they no longer run a culture program because of controversy over who the traditional owners of their town are.

# Who runs and supports school-based Aboriginal culture programs in the Kimberley?

## Aboriginal teaching staff and their roles in school culture programs

All but one school surveyed said that they employ Aboriginal Teaching Assistants (ATA), Aboriginal Education Officers (AEO), or Aboriginal Education Workers (AEW).

**Aboriginal teaching support staff were frequently identified by survey respondents as the school's primary cultural advisors. They were often referred to as the driving force behind culture programs.**

Their roles in culture programs varied, but numerous schools said that ATA/AEO/AEWs are not just a sources of cultural knowledge used to inform Aboriginal cultural content in school activities and programs, but are often key figures in structuring Aboriginal language and culture programs, making learning materials, helping to link programs to the curriculum and in the delivery of culture programs to students.

In addition to their general duties assisting classroom teachers and being a support mechanism for Aboriginal students, **ATA/AEO/AEWs were most often talked about by survey respondents as the essential link between the school, the community and students' families. Other frequently mentioned roles of ATA/AEO/AEWs was providing new teachers with cultural and community inductions, facilitating and organising on Country learning, camps, excursions and special programs like NAIDOC week.**

Aboriginal teaching and support staff in Kimberley schools are not always from the local Aboriginal cultural group. Although they may be part of the local community (often by marriage) and know local families and students well, school culture programs which rely on Aboriginal school staff as the primary cultural advisors to culture programs can sometimes encounter challenges due to the dynamics of cultural authority and legitimacy of Aboriginal school staff to speak for or teach about

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local cultural knowledge. These dynamics are not always clear to non-Indigenous staff who may not understand the specifics of kinship and cultural connections of their Aboriginal colleagues, nor the complex politics of local cultural groups.

## Aboriginal advisory bodies to Kimberley schools

Based on previous research evaluating school culture programs in the Kimberley we know that school-based Aboriginal culture programs benefit from having a strong network of cultural knowledge holders and advisors both within and outside the school. For this reason we asked survey respondents whether their school had formal advisory or governance bodies that include Aboriginal people. Responses indicate that there are some notable differences between the different school sectors in the Kimberley.

It is also evident that there is a spectrum of approaches to formalising the role of Aboriginal people in the running of schools in the Kimberley, and in the design and running of school-based Aboriginal cultural activities and programs specifically.

## Independent Schools

Independent schools in the Kimberley have generally been established to be culturally and structurally embedded within their communities. It is therefore not surprising that **all surveyed independent schools have a Aboriginal advisory and/or governance body**. Two of the surveyed independent schools are part of their local Indigenous corporation and have Aboriginal school committees (one with an Aboriginal chairperson). One surveyed independent school has an Aboriginal board made up of members from their 7 local feeder communities. Another surveyed independent school reported that they had recently established an Aboriginal language strategy advisory committee, but did not comment on the make up of their school board.

## Catholic Schools

**Half of the Catholic schools surveyed reported having an Aboriginal advisory, reference group or governing body**. Three of these schools said they had Aboriginal members on their school board, and **all but one said that they relied on their Aboriginal Teaching Assistants as their primary consultants regarding Aboriginal**

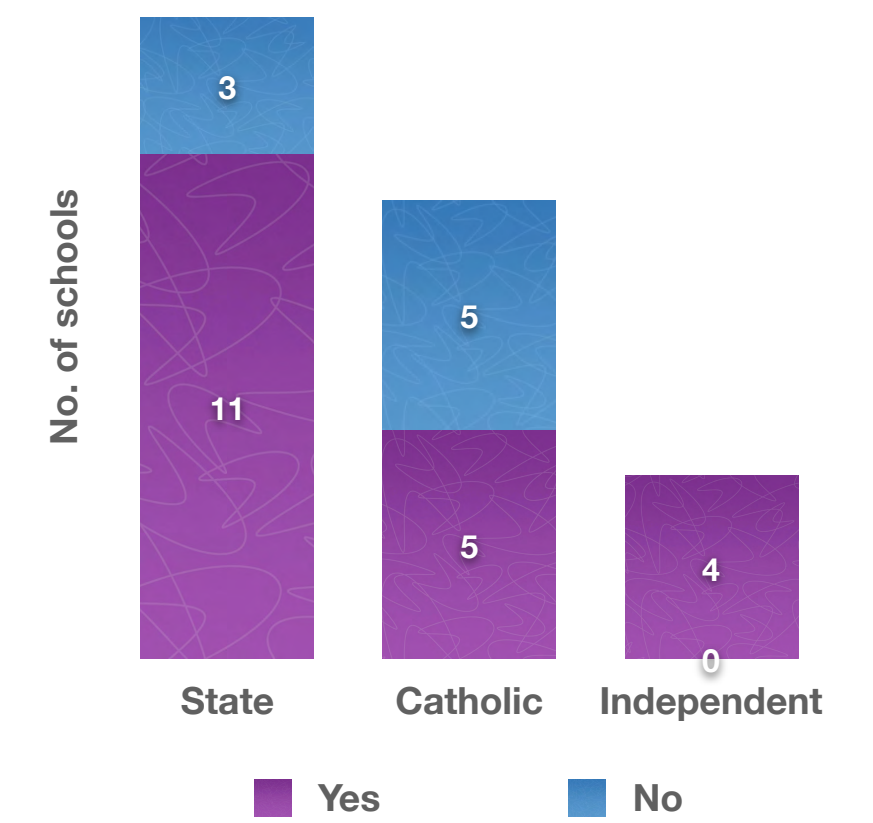
**culture and Aboriginal cultural activities.** Two Catholic schools reported that they have formal committees comprised of Aboriginal Teaching Assistants employed by the school.

**State Schools**

**More than three quarters (78.5%) of the State schools surveyed indicated that they have some form of Aboriginal advisory and/or governance body, however the specifics varied.** 6 schools said this function was fulfilled by having Aboriginal members on their school council or board (one school said their council was predominantly Indigenous). The rest of the surveyed state schools had Aboriginal groups or committees who played a role in school processes, some comprised of school staff, some of community members. Where detail was given these groups were usually concerned with Indigenous education generally. For some this included specific roles in designing or implementing school-based Aboriginal culture and culture programs along with other aspects of Indigenous education. Two of the surveyed state schools reported specific groups tasked with guiding or running Aboriginal culture programs. One school reported having a

specific culture team, and another said they had an Aboriginal language group led by elders which developed language and culture programs.

These results indicate that Catholic schools are heavily reliant on their Aboriginal Teaching Assistants and other Aboriginal school staff as the primary source of Aboriginal cultural knowledge



Schools with an Aboriginal advisory, reference, or governing body

and guidance, a relationship that is only occasionally formalised into groups or committees. State and independent schools tend to have formal Aboriginal groups with advisory or governance roles

in the school, although **only two State Schools and one independent school surveyed mentioned formal groups whose specific role is the development of school-based Aboriginal culture and language programs.**

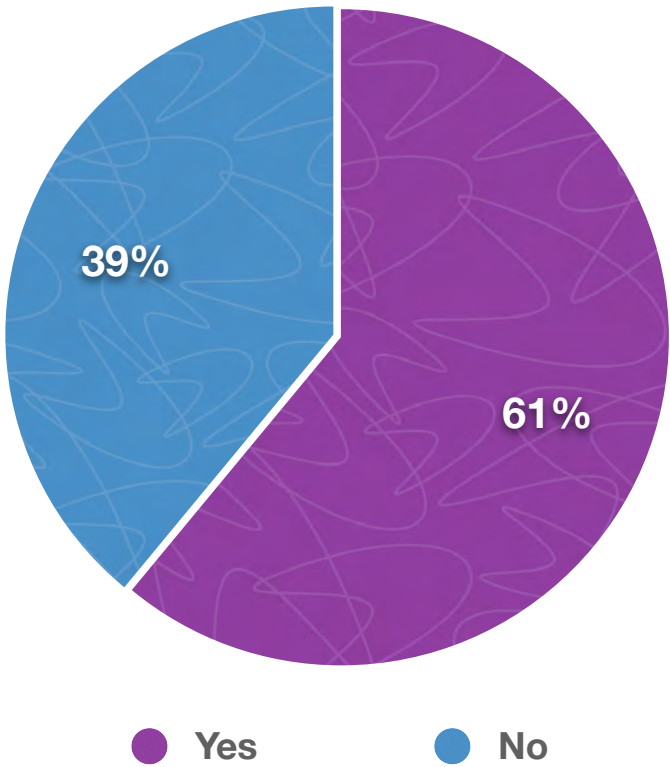
## Aboriginal Program Coordinators

In the survey we asked two questions related to who coordinated Aboriginal culture programs and Aboriginal programs in general\*.

From the State and Catholic responses it appears that ATA/AEO/AEW are most commonly encouraged to undertake the coordination of culture programs. **Only a few schools reported having a dedicated culture or language co-ordinator and these roles are usually not stand-alone full-time positions.** One school (a state school) reported that they have a completely stand-alone Aboriginal culture program coordinator. Dedicated culture coordinators from other schools were either regular staff members or groups of staff members that had hours allocated to coordinate Aboriginal culture programs.

These staff members were mainly Indigenous language teachers, Indigenous teachers or, most commonly, Aboriginal Teaching Assistants, although **not all people designated as culture program coordinators are Indigenous.**

Arrangements for the coordination of school-based culture programs varied in the independent schools surveyed. One independent school has a staff member with time allocated to co-ordinate culture programs, one has a mentor that works with all staff, and the other runs culture programs through a collaboration between three co-ordinators.



Schools with Aboriginal program coordinators or similar

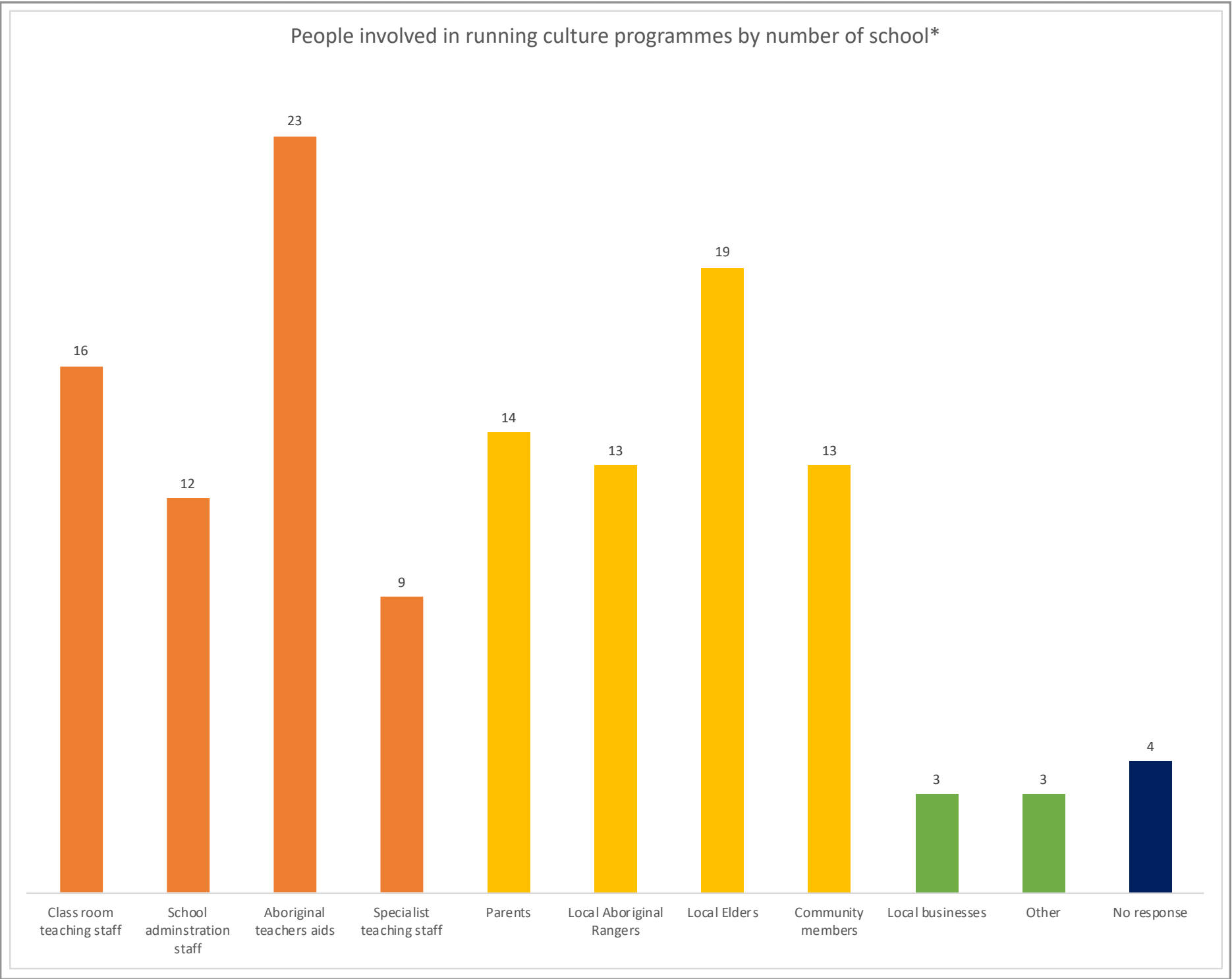
\* Q12 Do you have an Aboriginal Programs Coordinator or similar in your school? And Q37 Is there a dedicated staff member or members who have responsibility for programming and coordinating school culture activities?

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## Other people or groups involved in running school-based Aboriginal culture programs

A range of other groups and individuals were reported by surveyed schools to play important roles in their school-based Aboriginal culture programs. These included:

- Community members
- Elders and elders groups
- Community Councils
- Shire Councils
- Remote school attendance strategy teams
- Prescribed Body Corporates for local Traditional Owner groups
- Sporting organisations such as Garndawa and local football clubs
- Indigenous Ranger Groups – a number of schools identified that ranger groups provide important support for on-Country trips and activities and also provide cultural orientation for staff.
- Regional Cultural projects such as the Yiriman Project and My River Program
- Arts and development organisations and projects, such as Indigenous Hip Hop Project, the Indigenous Literacy Foundation and Girls from Oz
- Aboriginal resource agencies
- Youth groups
- Local church groups
- Local and regional media organisations, such as Goolari media
- Catholic Education WA



The graph above reports survey responses to Q35 “Who is involved in running these activities?” Respondents were able to choose more than one answer. ‘Other’ was not defined in the survey.

# Linking Aboriginal culture and language activities to mainstream curriculum

**A significant challenge for schools seeking to include local Aboriginal culture and language in their school curriculum is how these activities link to the mainstream curriculum.**

A few Kimberley schools have specific specialist educators in literacy or curriculum development employed on staff or as consultants who play a role in supporting the links between local Aboriginal cultural activities and classroom curriculum.

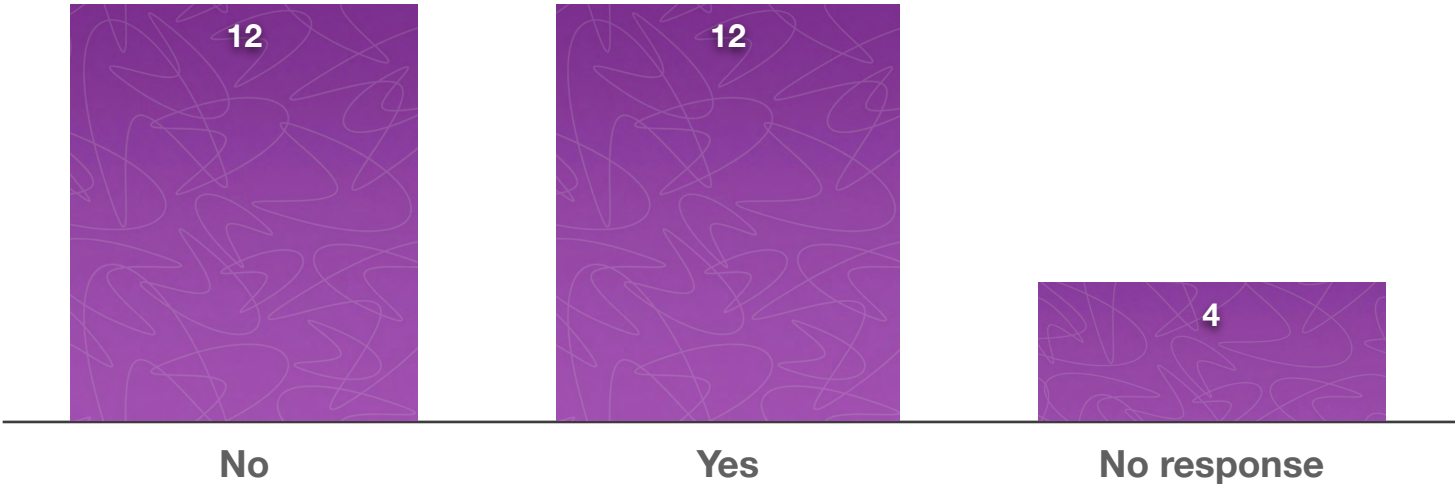
43% of the schools that responded to Q38 “Is there a person responsible for linking Aboriginal cultural activities to the broader curriculum?”, said their school had a person who was responsible for linking culture programs to the wider curriculum

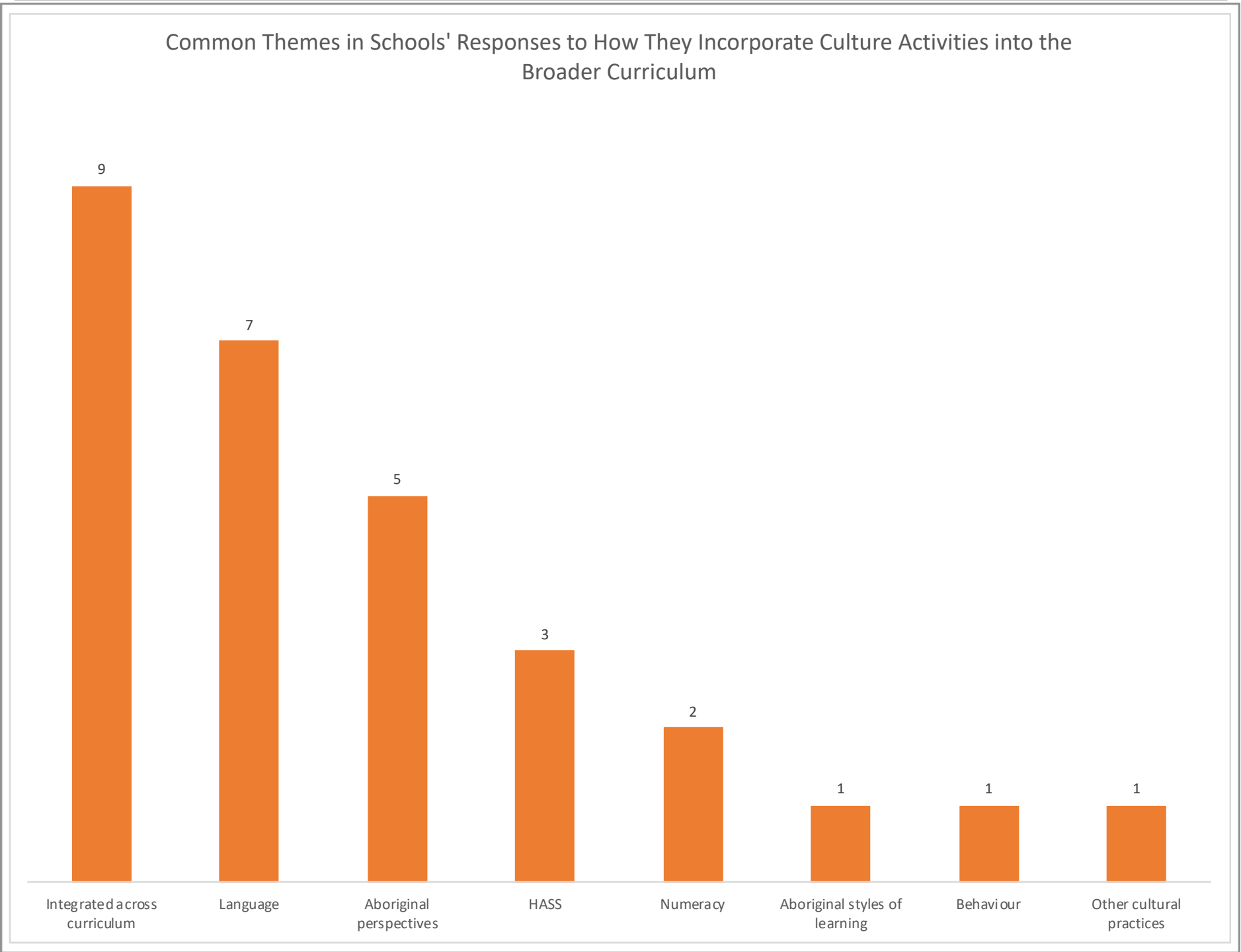
(usually Teachers and Aboriginal Teacher’s Aids). 57% said they did not have a person responsible for this, or gave no response.

43% of the 21 schools that responded to Q36 “Please describe how cultural activities are integrated into, or related to, the broader school curriculum?” said that they integrated (or embedded) Aboriginal culture across the curriculum. Many schools talked about an opportunistic approach to cross curriculum integration as well as the inclusion of Aboriginal knowledges and histories into targeted disciplines like Language, Numeracy and Humanities and Social Science (HASS).

Generally, schools reported that linking Aboriginal culture programs to the broader curriculum was the responsibility

Surveyed schools with a person responsibly for linking culture programs to the broader curriculum (Q38)





Q36 “Please describe how cultural activities are integrated into, or related to, the broader school curriculum?” 21 schools responded to this questions, common responses have been grouped under these terms and some schools mentioned more than one approach.

of classroom teachers and the Aboriginal Teacher’s Aids. A few schools indicated that they received support from outside the classroom (Deputy Principal/Principal or curriculum coordinator) or from outside the school entirely (Kimberley Regional Education Officer; Bunuba Steering committee).

# Why do schools implement Aboriginal culture programs? Perceived benefits and motivations\*

There were a range of perspectives expressed by participants in this research on the benefits of school-based Aboriginal culture programs. These include:

- Strengthening student participation in the school
- Modelling alternatives to academic and class-room based learning and teaching
- Stronger engagement of the school with the local community
- Raising the profile of local Aboriginal histories
- Cultural awareness of students and staff
- Supporting cultural transmission and cultural leadership

Growing student participation

**A number of survey respondents highlighted the perceived value of local Aboriginal cultural programs and activities in facilitating student participation and engagement with mainstream education frameworks.**

Some see this as having a direct impact on school attendance, and many see such programs as supporting overall engagement and enthusiasm of students about participating in school.

School culture programs in the Kimberley are perceived by many research participants to strengthen student engagement with literacy and numeracy through providing locally relevant contexts to engage with these skills, such as through making and reading books about local culture.

\* The discussion in this section draws on case study interviews and survey responses to Q52 - What benefits do you see resulting from the Aboriginal school-based cultural programs or activities (either in your school or other schools you know about)?

Q53. Who do you think benefits from school-based cultural programs?

Quotes are drawn from survey responses and case study interviews.

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## Modelling alternatives to academic and class-room based learning and teaching

Integrating Aboriginal cultural knowledge and practices into school-based learning is perceived by many educators in the Kimberley to provide Aboriginal students with more opportunities to be a 'good' student. **Culture programs offer opportunities for students to participate in alternative forms of learning and demonstrate skills other than those based in conventional classroom activities.**

**“The culture program provides alternative learning styles for students who don't want to learn from reading and writing, so they can learn from looking and doing.”**

Providing alternative modes of teaching and learning can make school more appealing to kids who become disengaged from more academic environments.

**“It helps to engage kids who are easily distracted or run amok in other school activities. We find cultural activities can help to re-engage disengaged kids”**

## Supporting student and staff wellbeing

The role of culture programs in making schools more welcoming and 'culturally safe' for Aboriginal students, staff and families was a strong theme that came through in the research. Respondents identified a range of factors that school-based Aboriginal cultural programs contribute to the wellbeing of students and staff. These include building individual confidence, stronger self esteem, a sense of belonging and cultural identity through experiences of Aboriginal culture being valued and reflected back in the school culture and curriculum.

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**“I have a real belief in the idea that language and culture is your identity and if you don't feel strong in your identity, in any culture, it really leaves you unanchored. Connecting with culture shapes the whole way you see things.”**

Stronger engagement of the school with the local community

**There is a strong sense from research participants that school-based Aboriginal culture programs support students and families to be more involved in the school.**

Cultural activities provide a meaningful context for Aboriginal community members to come into the school, as teachers, guest speakers and as participants in activities.

**“For the community members, rangers and Aboriginal staff at the school, being involved in these programs gives them a sense of pride and importance,**

**which I believe leads to greater job satisfaction, and greater self esteem.”**

**It is evident from this research that school-based Aboriginal culture programs often re-position Aboriginal staff from being educational support staff to being teachers and educational leaders.** The stronger presence of local culture and of Aboriginal staff in leadership roles makes schools more accessible and welcoming for Aboriginal students and families.

**“Students culture is embedded in the school, making it a welcoming place for parents and community.”**

Raising the profile of local Aboriginal histories

Opportunities for teaching and learning about local Aboriginal histories, people and cultural practices in Kimberley schools were seen as making an important contribution to raising general knowledge and profile of Aboriginal histories and people.

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**Several respondents highlighted the value of explicitly supporting the use of local Aboriginal histories and stories in the curriculum as important to both educate and validate local Aboriginal community members histories and cultures, and to support non-Indigenous school staff to fill gaps in their knowledge of the local area.**

Several respondents noted that teacher training generally has minimal content related to Aboriginal history, and that Kimberley histories and cultures are not well known to most teachers coming in from the outside the region.

Respondents noted the challenge that these knowledge gaps pose to class-room teachers in efforts to include local Aboriginal content in their curriculums, highlighting the critical importance of mechanisms to support the development, archiving and sharing of resources and teaching materials about local Aboriginal cultural and historical content in the Kimberley.

## Cultural awareness of students and staff

School-based culture programs build cultural awareness in both staff and students. The presence of strong and well run Aboriginal culture programming in a school increases the likelihood that new staff are provided with meaningful cultural induction when arriving in the community, and that they have more regular opportunities to learn and ask questions about local Aboriginal culture, language, community histories and social dynamics.

**Many respondents in this research highlighted the significant role that school-based Aboriginal culture programming plays in building cultural awareness, competency and sensitivity of non-Indigenous school staff, which in turn has a range of flow on effects to the cultural safety, relevance and accessibility of Kimberley schools for Aboriginal students and their families.**

This research found that there is still a need for more investment and support in ensuring regular and high quality cultural induction occurs in Kimberley schools across all sectors, even for schools already implementing Aboriginal culture and language programs.

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## Supporting cultural transmission and cultural leadership

Supporting transmission of local Aboriginal cultures and languages was seen as a key motivator for the majority of Aboriginal school staff taking part in this research. Supporting opportunities for cultural transmission within Kimberley schools is seen as making important contributions for preserving knowledge, relationships and empowering new generations to become cultural leaders and knowledge holders. Including Aboriginal cultural knowledges and practices in schools provides more access points for such knowledge for all people involved in the school.

**“The students and parents are very proud of their culture and their language. They take great delight in sharing their knowledge and seeing it respected within the school curriculum.”**

Many Aboriginal school staff highlighted the importance of providing as many contexts for students to learn and engage

with local cultural knowledge and language as possible. Many students in Kimberley schools are the next generation of Traditional Owners in the region and school-based Aboriginal culture programs are seen as an important part of ensuring cultural leadership will be strong into the future. Several respondents linked school-based culture programs to efforts to protect native title rights into the future through providing access points to cultural practice, knowledge and learning while children were involved in formal education.

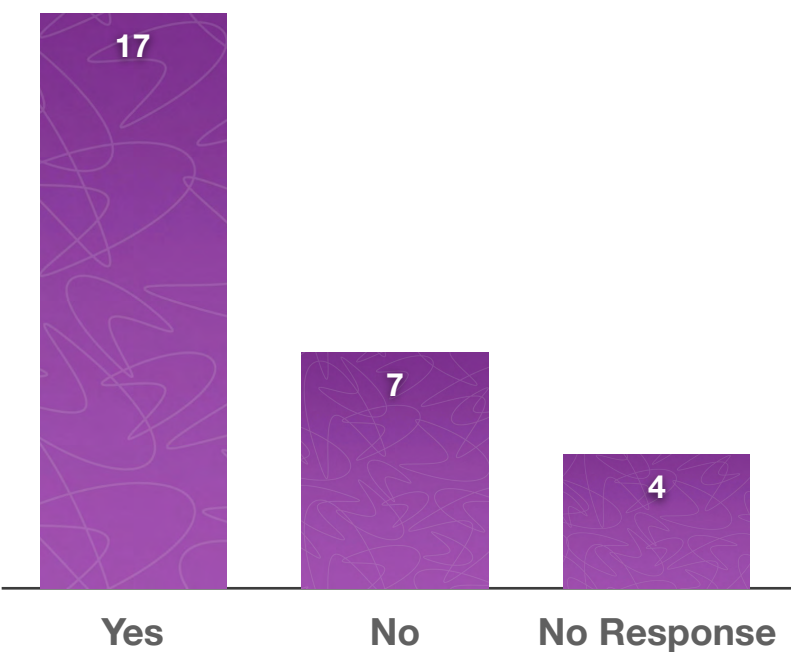
**“Respect to the elders is now back in our community. Parents are doing more cultural stuff with their children.”**

School-based Aboriginal culture programs are also perceived to build respect, pride and value for Aboriginal cultural knowledge, and for community elders.

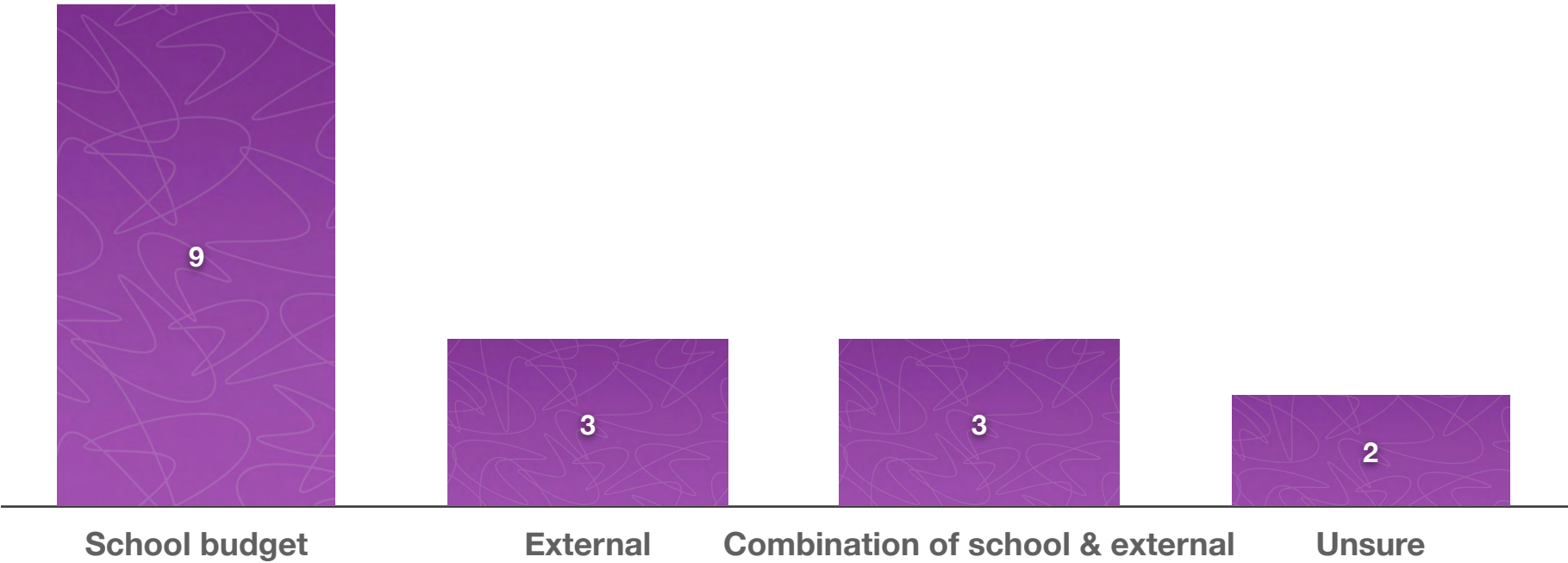
# Budgets & Funding

Budgets and funding for school-based Aboriginal culture programs reported by surveyed schools varied greatly. State and Catholic budget estimates for annual allocations for school-based culture activities were between 1 - 5 thousand dollars, with the majority reporting funds coming primarily from regular school budgets.

Not all surveyed Catholic or State schools currently running school-based Aboriginal culture programs had a specific budget pool allocated to these programs.



**Schools with a dedicated budget for running Aboriginal culture programs\***  
\*Q45 “Is there a dedicated budget for running Aboriginal cultural activities in your school?”



**Primary source of funding for schools with dedicated budget for running Aboriginal culture programs \***  
\*Q45 “Is there a dedicated budget for running Aboriginal cultural activities in your school?” including subquestion asking to give report

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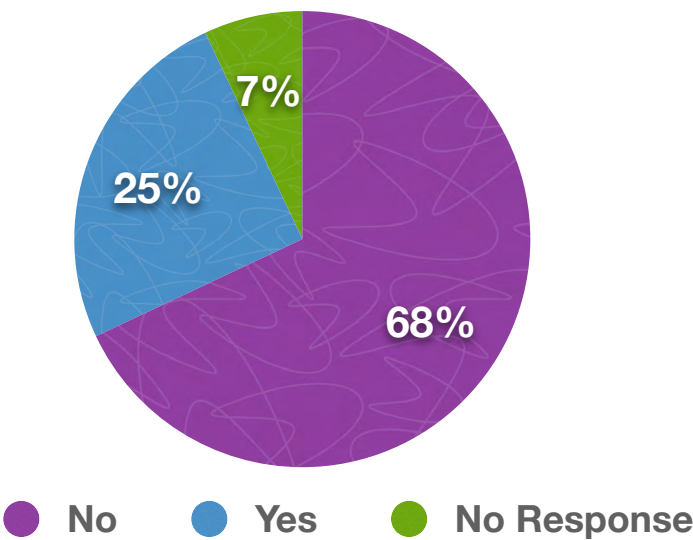
In contrast, all independent schools running school-based Aboriginal culture programs indicated they had a dedicated budget to do so. These budgets usually consist of funds from regular school budgets combined with external grants. One independent school reported a budget of \$65,000 over 2 years to support Aboriginal culture and language activities (including funds for employing a language consultant and supporting on Country learning). Another Independent school reported funding of \$20,000 for their language and culture activities.

# Knowledge of other school-based Aboriginal culture programs, past and present

## Knowledge of other school’s culture programs\*

A high number of surveyed schools were not aware of other school-based culture programs being run in the Kimberley.

**The limited awareness that survey respondents have of other Aboriginal culture programs being run is likely due to the lack of formalised, structured and consistent communication and promotion of best practice in cultural programming across schools and sectors.**



Schools that reported knowledge of other effective school-based Aboriginal culture programs.

\*Discussion based on responses to Q53 Do you know of other school based Aboriginal culture programs or activities that you think are effective?

## School-based Aboriginal culture programs no longer being run\*

The survey asked two questions to determine respondents knowledge of past school-based Aboriginal culture programs in their schools. Responses to these questions were not consistent and it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions from the results.

Almost all survey respondents were school Principals or Deputy Principals so the knowledge of Aboriginal staff is not represented in this data. Also, the corporate knowledge of respondents is potentially limited because many Principals and Deputy Principals may only have been in their roles for short periods of time. Some respondents were unsure why programs had stopped.

\*Discussion based on Q15 Has your school ever been involved in school-based Aboriginal cultural programs or activities? and Q46 In the past, has your school run Aboriginal cultural programs or activities that are no longer active?

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**The inconsistency of survey responses about knowledge of past programs highlights the lack of formal mechanisms for sharing knowledge about good practice in school-based Aboriginal culture programs in the Kimberley. This research showed there is a lack of consistent mechanisms in any of the school sectors in the Kimberley to manage handover of culturally oriented practice, relationships and knowledge when school leadership changes. With a change in school leadership often comes a change of priorities and practice, and a significant loss of corporate knowledge.**

The few respondents that were aware of the reasons for the discontinuation of past culture programs consistently cited lack of funding and difficulty in finding trained language speakers that would meet the requirements for teaching in schools. One school reported that controversies over who the traditional owners and language groups are for their community resulted in the end of culture programs at their school.

One State school which currently has a relatively small Aboriginal student population, said that the school's funding

model did not support funding 'cultural based programs', and that this was related, in part, to low Aboriginal student numbers. This school also mentioned that a 'lack of consistency in (cultural knowledge) providers doesn't support a consistency of cultural programs'.

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# 4

## Case Studies of local Aboriginal cultural programs in Kimberley schools

The following section presents case studies gathered from selected Kimberley schools showcasing their approach to implementing school-based Aboriginal culture programs.

Potential case study sites were identified based on survey responses, KALACC staff and colleagues in the Kimberley, and previous research on school culture programs in the region.

Potential case study schools were primarily selected based on interesting or unique approaches to delivering school-based Aboriginal culture programs. An effort was made to select case study schools that represented a cross-section of the 3 school sectors in the Kimberley (State, Catholic and Independent), geographic location (both remote and town based) and size (Primary School only as well as High School).

All case study schools also participated in the survey.

Please note - several schools approached to undertake case study research declined to participate in this part of the research citing lack of staff capacity and time. Additional interviews were conducted with schools that have not been included as case studies in this report. Data from these interviews has been integrated into overall findings of the research.



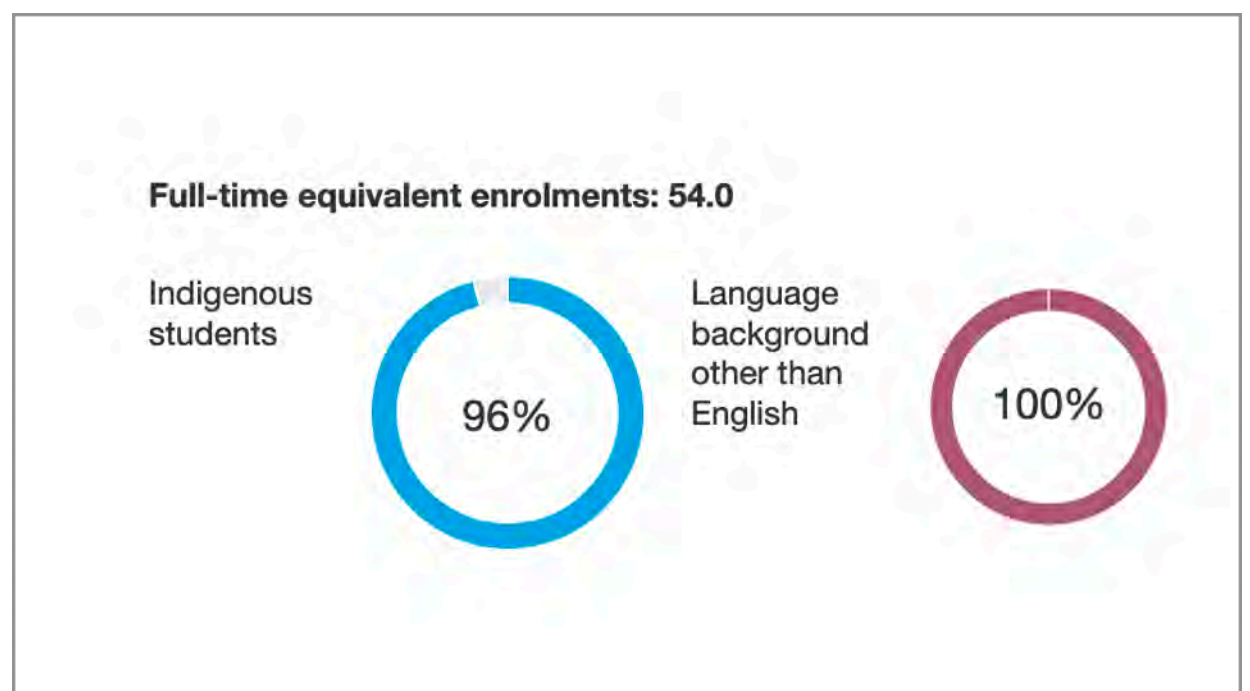
## Case Study 1 Yiyili Aboriginal Community School

Yiyili Aboriginal Community School is an independent school located in Yiyili community, East of Fitzroy Crossing on the Great Northern Highway. Classified as a very remote school, it teaches students from pre-primary to year 9. According to the 2018 figures on the My School website, the school has a total of 8 teaching staff (equalling 7.5 full-time equivalent teaching staff) and 13 Non-teaching staff (equalling 12.8 full-time equivalent non-teaching staff).

**“This is your language ... you don’t need to be ashamed. You’ve got to speak up ... you’re going to end up speaking it one day.”**

**“When you feel good about your culture you feel good about yourself.\*”**

### Yiyili Aboriginal Community School demographics 2018



The demographic data above is taken from the My School website 2018

\*PLEASE NOTE: Due to research protocols established for this study quotes drawn from interviews do not identify the speaker. All quotes in this report are drawn from interviews with school staff or from responses to the survey.

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## Approach to School-based Aboriginal culture programs

The approach to school-based Aboriginal culture programming at Yiyili Aboriginal Community School centres around Gooniyandi language and culture classes run four days a week in a dedicated language classroom in the school.

**“We want to make sure that language is valued, so having a language room where there is a dedicated place and space for language is important.”**

### Gooniyandi Language Classes

All students in the school have Gooniyandi language classes of approximately 15 minutes a day for each class. The language program is reported to have been re-prioritised under the previous school Principal.

“It hasn't just started in the last couple of years. There were some female AEWs who were really passionate about language, maybe in 2012 who really got it. Because they were confident each AEW taught their own class rather than having a centralised teacher like we have now. We just weren't able to do it like that in the last little while just because of the makeup of the AEWs.”

In 2018 this program was run by Frances Dawson, an Aboriginal person who is undertaking the Department of Education Indigenous Language Teaching 2 year traineeship program, supported by Carmel Leahy, a teacher linguist who provides part time support to the language program and to Aboriginal school staff in developing language literacy and lesson planning skills.

Gooniyandi is an endangered language and few students at Yiyili Aboriginal Community School are active speakers of the language at home.

“Most of the kids speak Kriol. So it's all the nouns that persist but the actual speaking in a sentence probably only happens at school currently. They probably hear (Gooniyandi) a little bit spoken but they wouldn't speak it much themselves.”

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By encouraging children to become active users of the language, through building their ability to speak whole sentences, sing songs and read short books, the value of Gooniyandi language, culture and identity is growing in students, changing their perceptions and fostering pride.

Through the structured Gooniyandi language program kids are becoming knowledge holders, users and transmitters.

**“Students are not going to learn how to introduce themselves in Gooniyandi, how to talk to each other in Gooniyandi, unless you do [teach] it in a very structured way.”**

The focus on Gooniyandi language in the school is intended to provide a link between classroom and home – facilitating inter-generational learning and cultural transmission by building language skill that can develop connections between kids and their grandparents and other cultural knowledge holders.

“So now we have this set of five sentences, plus a story book, plus a song and then key

words... By the end of the term the kids will have learnt that [sentence pattern], they will have learnt to use those key words in a number of other sentence patterns plus they will have learnt to read just a book of natural language, just spoken language, and they will have learnt to sing a song. So that’s a lot more than you’re going to get by casual bush trips or even structured bush trips.

**You need to set it up in a way that makes kids go, ‘Oh good, it’s Gooniyandi time!’**

Kids know whether or not they're learning, whether it's just a slack lesson or a genuine lesson. Even these littlies they'll go home and say the words they've learnt and by the end of just day two of the unit. By the end of the unit they'll be able to take little picture cards home and tell their families what the Gooniyandi word is. They've got songs they've learnt. They sing the songs. And then when we have Gooniyandi family day down at the river and Frances gets them up to sing the song they've learnt in here.”

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## Family Culture Days

The school runs Gooniyandi family day and other cultural celebrations during the year, which are opportunities for family and community members to participate in activities with the students and staff.

“We have things like we have Gooniyandi family day once or twice a year where we bring everyone down to school for a big feed. We had a NAIDOC celebration as well where everyone's invited. We had a NAIDOC ball. I mean that didn't have a language focus but just trying to really promote getting people in and a focus on the fact that it's an indigenous school so we're not just trying to teach white fella way, which is a criticism sometimes.”

**“I would suggest that compared to a lot of schools we do actually have a high focus on language and culture. But there's always more to be done.”**

## Bush trips on Country

On Country bush trips are also considered very important by the school, although sustaining the financial resources and logistics for these trips is an ongoing challenge.

**“Students want to show the teachers their country. They want them to enjoy the country. And it builds relationships between the school and community”**

The school has been able to attract funding to run On Country trips, as well as some learning on country funding that helps to pay for the teacher-linguist to work with school staff on literacy and language programs.

“We have some funding from the Wyemando bequest to take kids out for two days on country because that's always been a really important thing for the school board, to take kids out on bush trips.”

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During bush trips school staff will take photos, record language with speakers/elders when they talk (usually using personal devices). This material gets archived, and where appropriate posted on Facebook using both public sites and also a private school site just for parents. If the Gooniyandi language teacher is there during on-Country trips they will run a formal Gooniyandi class for the students out bush.

**“Just being out on country you learn about the place and how to conduct yourself.”**

## Environmental print

Other strategies used to support Aboriginal culture and language in the school include using environmental print - or written text in the school environment in English, Kriol and Gooniyandi, and encouraging the use of Gooniyandi in regular school activities. Although children are not taught in Kriol it is included in the environmental print around the school. The digital dictionary of Gooniyandi is on the school iPads and it is one of the favourite things to look at when they have free time. Part of formalising the language

program and creating a dedicated language space in the school has involved archiving all the old Gooniyandi and Kriol resources so they are accessible in the school as the program develops.

**“Something we've been doing a bit, which I'd like to expand, is in the morning the community like to have a prayer and there's a song that they sing most mornings that's in English first and then in Gooniyandi as well so sort of things like that. The song that tells the kids to come in is in Gooniyandi. So just trying to put in little things so that kids are hearing it in multiple ways.”**

Students are also encouraged to read locally made books and stories in other local Aboriginal languages, as a way to develop their skills to write and talk about their own culture.

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“The kids are learning to read a particular story and it’s teaching the children how to write a narrative but it also teaches a lot about another Indigenous culture, Walmajarri, so that then they get writing skills to talk about Gooniyandi culture.”

This both is a strategy to get around the lack of resources available for Gooniyandi and to use the rich knowledge and history of the region to support strong cultural identity for students.

## Who designs and runs Aboriginal Culture programs and activities at the school?

In 2018 at the Yiyili Aboriginal Community School the language and culture program was being designed and run by a dedicated Indigenous language teacher / culture co-ordinator who is undertaking Department of Education training to become a qualified language teacher. Another AEW had been undertaking the course but did not continue.

The language and culture program was supported by a 0.5 FTE teacher-linguist paid from grant funding, who works at the

school to work in 3 week blocks (3 weeks at the school, 3 weeks away). She provides support wherever needed – to classroom teachers, AEWs, cleaners, coaches, whoever need support. She often assists to AEWs and teachers, particularly to help tie culture into the curriculum and provide support in lesson planning and language program development.

**“Teacher training is key to making it sustainable. The worst thing that can happen is you set up language programs in the school, you ask elderly people to come in and run it, and nobody’s trained them in how to do it, it becomes boring so what is the image of their student’s culture and traditional language? Boring.”**

**“Teaching’s not an easy job for anyone but if you’re going to do it you want people trained. You can’t just say you speak this language so off you go and teach.”**

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The Aboriginal Education Workers at the school are studying towards their Certificate 3 in Education support. Both the school and the AEW's are committed to cultural safety, which means using more Gooniyandi across the school, and teaching non-Indigenous teachers and AEWs more Gooniyandi.

“The classroom AEWs have differing levels of confidence with Gooniyandi. We've had some AEWs here who really are not confident with the language. They may be the partner of someone in the community so they may not be a Gooniyandi speaker. Then there are some AEWs who are happy to take a bit of a role, so in the Kindy for the moment we've got a teacher that's happy to do songs and say good morning in Gooniyandi and kind of weave it through the day.”

Having the 0.5 teacher-linguist support role provides very important additional support across the school to run the language and culture program. The ability for teachers to tie language and culture back into their classroom curriculum is variable based on the skills and interests of individual teachers. Some of the teachers were successfully trying activities from bush trips into history and literacy curriculum, often drawing on support and

advice on resources from the teacher-linguist consultant and the school Principal. However the extent to which language and culture activities tie into classroom curriculum is very dependent on the skills, interests and capacities of the individual teachers.

**“Programs can't rely on one exceptional person – so you need a good committed community person but you also need more people. That's why we're doing AEW training in the local Aboriginal language and on how to take classes.”**

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## IHHP- Yiyili Mawoolie 'Yiyili Kids'

“In 2017 we invited the Indigenous Hip Hop Project (IHHP) out. We've done several songs with them in the past and then last year Frances just said "I think we should do it all in Gooniyandi" and I said "Okay, that might be quite hard" and she goes "No, no, no. I've got an idea." She took a song called Yiyili Mawoolie which means Yiyili kids, which was an old song that they used to sing to the kids.

The fact it's entirely in Gooniyandi I think is pretty amazing. It was the first time that IHHP that done that which in some way is a little bit surprising because they've worked in so many communities and they've done parts in language. Also I think it's quite surprising because Gooniyandi it's a very endangered language. It's not like going somewhere where the language is still spoken a lot. So to be able to put a whole song together is pretty amazing.”

**You can see the video and hear the song on YouTube:**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AqU3StOSMQo>**

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## Who else is important to making culture programs work at the school?

As an independent community school the staff are very aware of the importance of getting buy in from the community to support their language and culture activities.

**“If you include history from this area, people’s language, you get so much more buy in of your community in the school because they know – and they come and tell you stuff and then you’re sharing, you know. It turns the whole (western school) dynamic on its head.”**

“Community people will always consider language important but it’s very hard for them to run it without our support. ”

One of the important community support mechanisms to the Gooniyandi language program has been mentoring of trainee language teachers by senior language speakers. This is actively encouraged

through the Department of Education Aboriginal Language teachers trainee program.

“Sometimes we have elders that come out on bush trips. The lady who recently stopped doing the language teacher course and Frances both had mentors.

Unfortunately Frances' mentor just passed away over the holidays so I'm not quite sure the impact that will have. He was the fella that actually wrote the orthography for Gooniyandi too so he was considered very knowledgeable in the area. So that's a bit of a concern for me is who she'll look to to support her to get through the rest of her course.”

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# Challenges

## Logistics and administration

Finding ways to fund and support administration and logistics related to school-based language and culture activities, such as bush trips and special activities, presents a constant challenge to a small school such as Yiyili.

**“The biggest challenge probably is capacity. When there's lots of demands. It's very hard to work with competing demands and also just the workload is high so people do genuinely get worn out. Continuity of staff would be another one. Access to funding would be another one.”**

“We're sort of getting to that point now where some teachers who have been here for 18 months are like "oh well we could set up checklists for future teachers and we could try and facilitate the process a bit more" because it is quite a big burden on

the teachers in some ways. It requires a lot of organisation and it's tiring because you're out bush.

It is challenging at times for teachers, especially when they're new. It's hard for me to remember when you need to just rock up to people and say "hi, do you want to come on a bush trip?" Because they don't always feel confident to do so.”

## Insurance

**“Now that they're saying that you can't put children under seven in troop carriers sideward facing.”**

“So government schools now say ‘don't have sideward facing troopies’. So I'm in the situation where I've got a Troopie that probably needs replacing. We can't take it legally on the highway. It just becomes hard and you can't get a vehicle to take kids out. We'll probably get a HiAce van so that we can get Kindy kids to go to towns more easily than troop carriers but they can't get out to some of these waterholes. They need troop carriers to get out. I'm absolutely understanding of the legalities around it and why people are concerned about children travelling in

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these vehicles but the reality is it does stop them getting out on country.”

## Cultural capacity of teachers

Yiyili is committed to building the capacity of all of their staff to create culturally safe environment for students and staff, and this means building the capacity of non-Indigenous teachers through where possible providing cultural induction and language training. But this can present additional challenges to scheduling, resourcing and staff capacity as it is extra on top of the usual running of the school and delivery of curriculum.

“Frances said it would be really good for the teachers to know some more Kriol. So she would take the teachers – I think they did about four sessions and they did a little play together. I took the kids. So the teachers spoke Kriol and did a little play at assembly for the kids in Kriol. Yeah, the kids thought it was hilarious. But again that required me taking the whole school for games on the basketball court to release the teachers to be able to do it. I mean I had the AEWs down there with me, the other ones.”

## Funding for on country learning

Finding funding to support on-country activities is challenging. Yiyili was successful in attracting philanthropic and grant funding to support learning on country activities. Philanthropic groups are reluctant to fund schools directly, so access to external funding to support school-based language and culture activities can be limited.

“(Philanthropy) don't want to take responsibility for things that they think the government should take responsibility for. But then that leaves us in a bit of a bind around how you actually fund the program at school. We fund Frances ourselves. I did try and put an application in to get her separately funded and didn't get anywhere with it.”

## Funding cultural and language teachers

When an AEW or community member becomes qualified as a language teacher they are still not qualified to take a class without another teacher present. So they usually continue to be paid as AEO's despite their specialist skills. Finding ways to resource them in recognition of their increased skill can be challenging to small school budgets.

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## Benefits

**“It was interesting when we first started Gooniyandi quite a few years ago. The kids would giggle. They did a lot of laughing. They weren't used to Gooniyandi being at school because it sort of had stopped. But now the kids just know that it's part of school.**

At Yiyili Aboriginal Community School the strength and confidence of children in engaging with Gooniyandi, and other local Aboriginal languages and cultures, is clearly growing.

“They enjoy the classes. So there's lessons for kids every day. The idea is that a little bit of language every day is great and we try and have some environmental print.”

The school is aiming to have all year group language and culture lessons run entirely in Gooniyandi language, a model they are already trialling with the high school kids with good success.

**“The high school kids want to learn to write Gooniyandi which is good. And speak it... You can hear a pin drop when she takes their lessons and they all respond. They can feel themselves learning...**

**Frances makes sure they see her lesson plan. So she's a model of training for them so in future they might think about being teachers and Gooniyandi teachers.”**



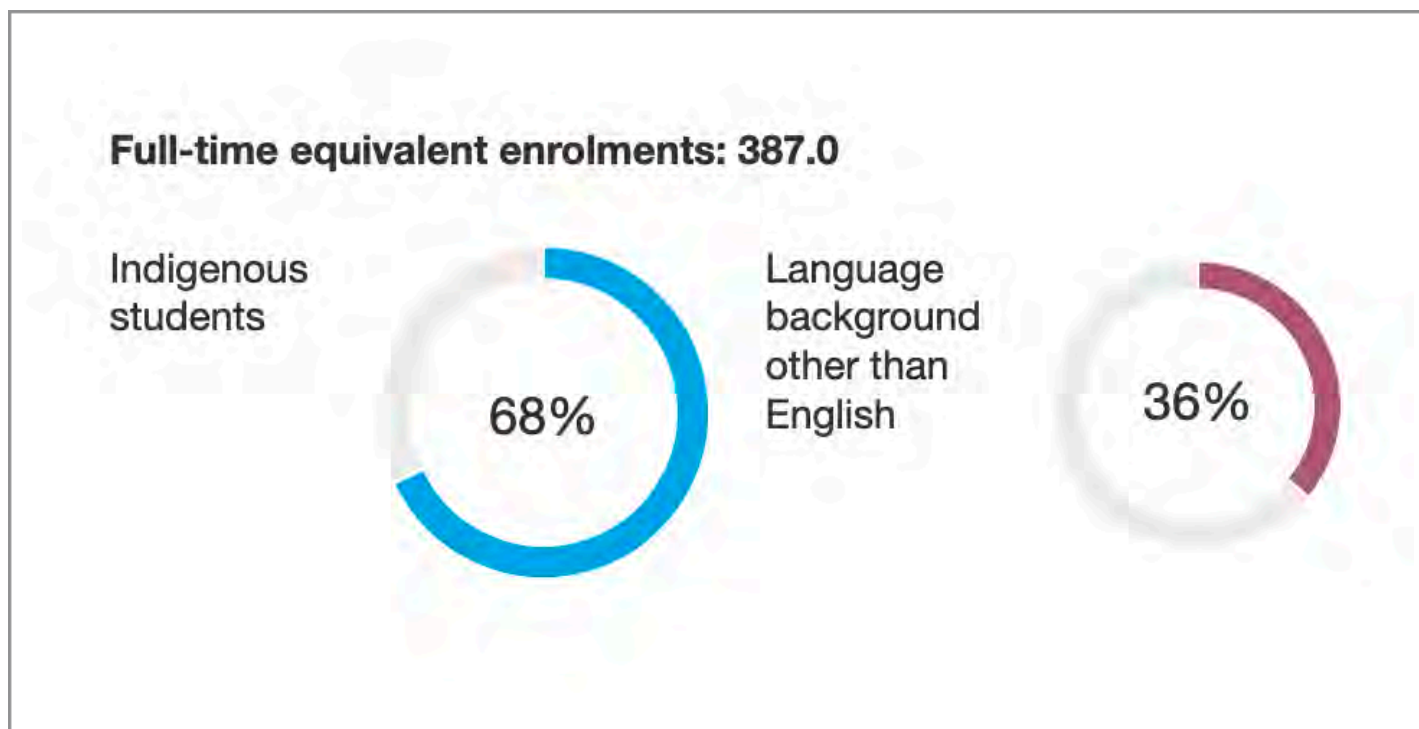
Cable Beach Primary School is a remote state school located in the suburb of Cable Beach in Broome, Western Australia. Teaching students from Kindergarten to Grade 6, the school has a total of 33 teaching staff (comprised of 28.3 Full-time equivalent teaching staff) and 27 Non-teaching staff (comprised of 23.6 Full-time equivalent non-teaching staff).

## Case Study 2

# Cable Beach Primary

**“If you adopt a position of inclusion and recognition you go a long way to promoting a good feel for the school, a warm educational climate that is culturally aware\*.”**

### Student demographics at Cable Beach Primary in 2018



Infographic above taken from the 2018 My School website <https://myschool.edu.au/school/48700>

\*PLEASE NOTE: Due to research protocols established for this study quotes drawn from interviews do not identify the speaker. All quotes in this report are drawn from interviews with school staff or from responses to the survey.

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## Approach to School-based Aboriginal culture programs

**“We try to embed Yawuru culture into Cable Beach Primary practice.”**

### Yawuru language project

The focus of the Cable Beach Primary approach to school-based Aboriginal culture programs is the learning of Yawuru language in the school through the provision and continuation of the Yawuru Language Program. Every class from K to 6 gets a Yawuru language and culture session every week, with Kindergarten to Year 2 participating in half hour lessons, and Years 3 to 6 participating in full hour long lessons.

“Learning language in the school setting is not the most ideal way. All the students get is that ½ hour or hour a week. But at our school we’ve tried really hard to incorporate language and culture into other areas so they’re not just getting what they get in the language lesson. They’re seeing and hearing language used in other settings throughout the week.”

### Environmental text in Yawuru through naming

Yawuru words and names have been given to parts of the school and are clearly displayed. This process has been done incrementally through the naming of individual blocks and buildings. As staff and students become more proficient in using Yawuru names, other parts of the schools infrastructure, like individual classrooms, have also been named using Yawuru words. Many of these words relate to the Yawuru seasons, cultural or environmental elements.

**“Our Yawuru language class doesn’t offer teachers the opportunity to opt out. They have to sit in on the lessons. They are learning as well.”**

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“The idea is that class-room teachers are building their capacity and understanding of the First Nation perspectives from this area. Hopefully it is inspiring them to think about putting Indigenous perspectives in other learning areas as well. This seems to be gaining a bit of ground now. At first the attitude of teachers seemed to be ‘Oh the students go to Yawuru class, they learn Yawuru and I don’t need to do anything else’. Now there’s a bit more accountability on class-room teachers, especially with the Indigenous focus across the curriculum.

So while we are lucky to have an Indigenous language as the Language program in our school class-room teachers still understand that it’s their responsibility to carry what they’re learning through to the other strands of teaching and learning. For instance, if the class is going to learn about seasons, then instead of talking about Summer, Autumn, Winter, and Spring, then maybe they would look at the Arnhem Land six seasons. Now that they understand how many language groups we have here in the Kimberley they are a bit more open to finding out about how we understand it here.”

**“The shift that I have seen in non-Indigenous teachers is that they are starting to realise that they are not being asked to teach Yawuru language and culture as experts or specialists, but that the ask is more to facilitate the learning both for themselves and their students. The fear of doing the wrong thing, or to be seen to be representing our culture inappropriately, held them back. But by working and planning together with us as Aboriginal people and with a strong language program in our school they are beginning to see opportunities and benefits for their students to continue to learn while demonstrating that they as teachers are learning as well.”**

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Participating in the Yawuru language program is not optional at Cable Beach Primary School. Cable Beach Primary has about 70% Indigenous students, that come from a range of cultural and language groups. Not all parents initially want their children participating in Yawuru language and culture programs.

**“We try to be very transparent from the beginning to point out why all students are expected to participate in Yawuru language classes at Cable Beach Primary. Some people say, ‘I don’t want my kid learning Yawuru. They’re not Yawuru. They’re from some other country and I want them learning their own language.’ ”**

“We have a Frequently Asked Questions sheet that goes out early in the year and gets given to new enrolments so they have some understanding that Yawuru is part of our school values. It’s not an opt out. We explain the reason why we learn Yawuru, that Broome sits within Yawuru country. It

breaks down how studies show that by learning another language you reinforce the learning of your first language. We spell out the benefits and also that the cultural diversity of our school and our town is valued. You are not going to be told if it’s not Yawuru it’s nothing. Everyone has got something to share. Everyones cultural experiences are valued just as much as Yawuru.”

Efforts to integrate Indigenous cultural knowledge into the curriculum

There is a high percentage of Indigenous staff at Cable Beach Primary, including some Indigenous classroom teachers, which is helping to encourage teachers to integrate Indigenous cultural knowledge into the curriculum.

**“If you're going to look at Aboriginal perspectives, a story from down south might be easily accessible on the web. But looking at a story a bit closer to home is a better option. It is a way to acknowledge the first mob**

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**from around here. Not necessarily always Yawuru. The Kimberley is so rich in culture. If classes are looking at Ned Kelly, why not look at Jandamarra first?”**

“We encourage teachers to use the amazing resources that are around now, like the Jetty to Jetty app, that Nyamba Buru Yawuru also provided to us as a PDF document. Teachers can use it to focus on an area of Broome history and incorporate some stories told from people who lived here. Not just Aboriginal people, but everyone.

There is also the Yawuru language app. It is on every iPad in the school, so there’s no excuse to say we couldn’t find this or we couldn’t find that. Teachers are provided with a lot of resources that have been built around the things that we teach in Yawuru class across the year levels. This means that in any language teacher is absent, students can hear someone practising a song or practising the key sentence patterns or key words and still continue learning.

If teachers have to make up a lesson they probably won’t do it, but if we make it

really easy - just click here, press that - then the kids will still hear Yawuru language every week.”

## Cultural events with local community

Cable Beach Primary also holds culturally based community activities at the school, such as a regular storytelling night.

“We celebrate all the main celebratory things like Reconciliation Week. NAIDOC is quite big here. We have bi-lingual whole school assembly to start it off on the Monday.”

“When we run story telling night we invite the whole of Broome in, essentially. We have, on occasions, had three or four hundred people come in. We have four or five stations on the oval and in the library. There’s a story at each campfire and they vary. One person tells the scary story. There are traditional cultural stories. There are also screenings of DVDs and contemporary films that have been made.... So people rotate around and that seems to work because after hours community stuff seems to leap frog some logistical challenges.”

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**“Storytelling Night provides an opportunity for our staff to connect with the community and it just reiterates that openness to Cable Beach Primary School, that parents are always welcome anytime.”**

“During NAIDOC week we’ve had things like a big food sharing lunch. When we can arrange it - because it’s a lot of work - we have guests come in and do different cultural things with them as a whole school. These days each block runs their own activities. They might have one or two guests that come on a particular day that they share those guests around.”

Yawuru elders and speakers are invited as special guests to assemblies and are also an integral part of school graduation procedures at Cable Beach Primary.

AEIO’s provide cultural induction to new staff coming to the school.

Past School-based Aboriginal cultural activities run at Cable Beach Primary School

“In the past we’ve had elders come in and cook damper and teach students about the old ways. We’ve have young fellas come in and show how to make boomerang or spear or different tools and things like that from scratch. We’ve had storytellers come and tell dreaming stories. We’ve had other guests like artists, people who are writers.

We’ve had different language groups come to share, like Bevan Yunupingu sharing some of his Yolngu culture explaining to them about the didgeridoo, where it came from and it’s significance to their way of life. He brought in his young dancers and they shared dance.

We’ve had the Nurlu project come in through Yawuru and teach a group of kids from a couple of year levels for a term.

Nurlu is a public kids dance, which Yawuru are trying to strengthen again because it was sleeping for a little while. Through the program kids learn about preparing for Nurlu and what needs to happen. Then they performed Nurlu for the NAIDOC assembly.”

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Who designs and runs Aboriginal Culture programs and activities?

**At Cable Beach Primary at the moment there is no one who coordinates the overall approach to language and culture.**

“Our AEIOs meet regularly as a team, but there’s no formal structure for progressing a cultural studies program at Cable Beach”

The Yawuru language teacher employed by the school (a Yawuru person) coordinates language classes and has formed a Yawuru team to help support these classes.

“We have a Yawuru team now. We have teams in the school for different things, English, or science, so it’s not just the one person running the whole show. So we decided to form a Yawuru team like they have a NAIDOC committee. Often its assumed to be the Indigenous people on staff who are going to run all those things. But it’s interesting because for the Yawuru team we had about 12 people last year, which was the biggest team in the school.”

Who else is important to making culture programs work at Cable Beach Primary School?

Cable Beach Primary School is supported in their language and culture programs by a close collaboration with Nyamba Buru Yawuru (NBY). NBY have run immersive language programs for Yawuru people to ensure there are teachers to teach the language going forward.

**“NBY have presented a complementary resource for us at Cable Beach Primary School. NBY are active keeping the Yawuru language alive. They’ve made significant investments in developing their own people as Yawuru teachers. It was really just a no brainer recognising that we’ve got some emerging Yawuru teachers. They need a place to learn their craft in a real setting, so our relationship has been mutually beneficial.”**

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The Yawuru speakers who have taught and currently teach Yawuru at Cable Beach Primary (and some other schools in Broome) have also received training through the WA Department of Education Traineeship for Aboriginal Languages Teachers.

The current Yawuru Language teacher completed the WA Department of Education Indigenous language teacher training in the 2000's.

“Aunty Dianne Appleby had done that as well and since then there's been a whole bunch more Yawuru people who have gone through program. We're lucky enough to have one Yawuru person who has just graduated and another who has been doing her teaching practice in the school for a couple of years now. It's been fantastic for our school to have two other Yawuru teachers here training, and now graduating. The one who has just graduated will do relief work when the main Yawuru teacher is away and will get paid for it. It's giving her a pathway to proper work that is more guaranteed than just getting the phone call like a regular relief teacher.

The two people who are doing the WA Department of Education Language Teacher traineeship both did the Walalangga Yawuru Ngan-ga immersion

program in its first iteration. That was a two year program that they completed last year.

The idea is that Yawuru Language Programs can be offered in every school in Broome. That's why NBY are building such a pool of teachers. Hopefully those that graduate are going to get full time employment in the different schools. That's the aim. Whether the schools move as quickly as the trainee teachers to be able to implement the program is not certain.”

## Challenges

Being based in town can bring particular challenges to running whole-of-school Aboriginal culture activities, especially activities off the school grounds.

**“The Yawuru environment is rich, there's no problem there, it's really just the logistics and the legalities that are the challenge. Being in a town school presents a lot more logistical challenges...”**

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**transporting, opting in, opting out... What do you do for those students whose parents decide that no, that's not really why I send my child to school? There's so many things that you need to work through..."**

"When you see school-based cultural activities going on in other places it's inspiring. When you hear about the whole school going out on country for a camp or building a fish trap together I can't help but feel jealous. Here in town if we could only just pack them all up on a bus and take them out to fish. Just do every day stuff together a bit more.

We've tried to organise more activities on Country in past. The response often is 'Oh we've got to fill out this form and you've got to stay this many metres away from the water, so you need this many staff members for the activity...'. In the end leadership have said 'Look, you're probably better off just putting a notice around to say we're going to meet in this spot on the weekend. If you can then come with your family, and if you can't give us a yell and we'll give you a lift.' We made it happen like that but it wasn't really a school activity anymore."

## Benefits

"In the last five years our Yawuru language program has gone from strength to strength. I can see that if I did step away from it and if another younger Yawuru person came up to step in it's definitely set up for that. It's not just a one person thing. It should be a shared community thing across the school."

**"You can see the pride in young people when they're able to use language together. Non-Indigenous kids can participate in that pride because they live here too. Whether they're singing or just using the greeting or mixing it up with their friends you can see that they're proud of what they've learnt. It's not that bowing shame like it used to be. It's a nice feeling to see that pride when they're speaking or singing, not just from Cable Beach but from other schools as well now."**

# The history of the Yawuru Language Program at Cable Beach Primary

As told by Dalisa Pigram-Ross

There's a story to everything. The Yawuru Language Program at Cable Beach Primary School is in its 22nd year in 2019. I think they have the longest continuous running program, which speaks to the leadership at the school that valued it, because there have been definite threats along the way.

I think that real value for Yawuru Language within the school staff and the spirit is due to Doris Edgar. Elder Mrs Doris Edgar was very instrumental, with her daughter Dianne, in getting Yawuru language started, first at Broome Primary School and then shifting over here to Cable Beach Primary School.

There has been a number of different teachers that have come in to facilitate with Doris Edgar as the language specialist and often those teachers were non-Indigenous. There was a point in the journey that one of the teachers thought this should be an Indigenous teacher facilitating, and they should be training up a Yawuru person to learn from the elder and then transferring that into the lessons.

I was lucky enough to become involved as a young Yawuru descendant and mother. My eldest daughter, who is 21 years now, was at Pre-Primary then. My current sister-in-law was the non-Indigenous teacher at the time and she said, "Would you be interested to learn from the elder because this language program should be run by Aboriginal people". That's how I got involved.

I come from an arts and theatre background, and still do that work. I had no idea about teaching in schools. I was lucky enough to have Merilee Lands, who's an amazing Aboriginal teacher, of Gooniyandi descent, who was the LOTE teacher at the time.

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She became the Yawuru language teacher working with myself and Mrs Doris Edgar as the language specialist.

Past teachers, like Aunty Dianne Appleby, had done an amazing job with songs and books and other materials for teaching Yawuru. We gathered them all up to make a language journey across the primary school arc. We were able to make a curriculum for this school on how and what students could learn in Yawuru at different levels. We worked with Lola Jones from the district office, who was looking after Indigenous languages across the state.

It was all pretty clunky learning at first. At the time the language program at Cable Beach was offered as a choice between Indonesian or Yawuru. Yawuru had been a choice for the first half of the the language program journey. Then at one point the government decided to take some money away from schools for languages, and Indonesian was no longer offered at Cable Beach. But Nyamba Buru Yawuru were happy to support the relief teaching of Yawuru when I was away for dance projects. Community members or training teachers or people working in the Language Centre would come over and continue Yawuru lessons, so the program stayed strong. With the in-kind support from NBY the school was able to keep the Yawuru Language Program going because it didn't cost them anything. This arrangement actually added value to the program because you were not just seeing one teacher teaching in one classroom. You're getting to see what else is happening in the community.



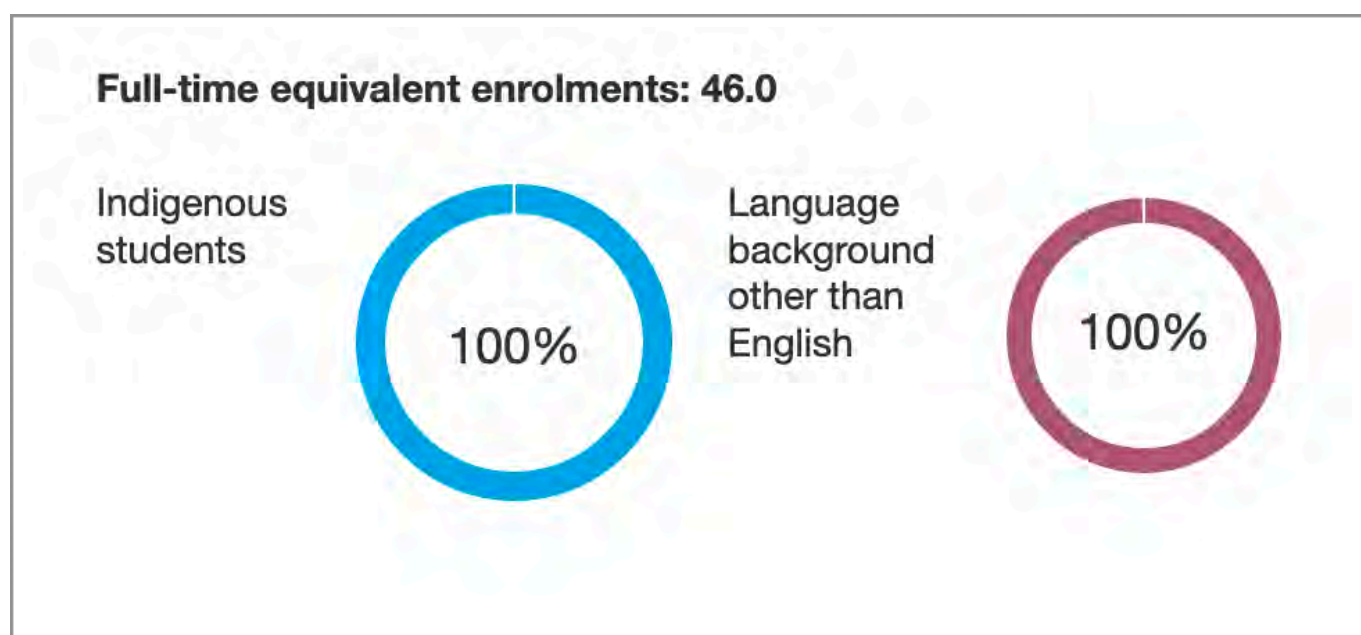
## Case Study 3 Purnululu Aboriginal Independent Community

\*PLEASE NOTE: Due to research protocols established for this study quotes drawn from interviews do not identify the speaker. All quotes in this report are drawn from interviews with school staff or from responses to the survey.

Purnululu Aboriginal Independent Community School is an school located in Wurrenranginy community, 30 km South of Warmun in the East Kimberley. Classified as a very remote school, it teaches students from Pre-Primary to Year 10. In 2018 the school had a total of 6 teaching staff (6 FTE teaching staff) and 15 Non-teaching staff (10.4 FTE non-teaching staff).

**“We got to think about our country. Because we need these kids to know the Gija language, the Dreamtime stories for all this country. We know there’s a lot of mining and everything happening so we need these kids to know. Because 20 years down the track they might come and say, ‘You don’t know, you can’t speak your language from this area. You’re not traditional owner or anything’. I’m thinking in the bigger picture, me. It’s for keep going.”**

### Purnululu Aboriginal Independent School demographics 2018



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## Approach to School-based Aboriginal culture programs

**“We try to link everything we do in the school back to Gija. For example: Texts that we study in literacy and processes that we learn in numeracy. This is beginning to happen slowly which is building the foundation for solid practices that enable better understanding of concepts and building language skills for our students and even our staff.”**

The Gija culture and language program at Purnululu Aboriginal Independent Community School is one of the three curriculum priority areas for the school, sitting equally alongside Maths and English. This means that equal resources are given to these three curriculum areas, including funding from the core school budget.

“All of our students here are currently on an Individualised Learning Plan so we assess each student depending on their personal progress and level of understanding. We really want to strive to be assessing and reporting on Gija in the same way that we do with other learning areas. For Gija, we currently assess and report in terms of engagement and understanding. The program runs once a week during the school term with additional activities and learning based on bush trips, excursions and events around the community as well in other learning areas across the school as mentioned earlier.”

**“In the past there has been a lot of great Gija learning happening in our school but in the recent years, there has not been a structured curriculum which we are currently working towards. When I started here in 2017, I spoke to the Elders and ATAs to find out what they want out of the program and then have helped to put this into a formal plan that links to the West Australian Curriculum.”**

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“I ask our Gija teachers each week how they want to deliver the lesson content and which language words/sentences/phrases they will be teaching. I then prepare the resources and a plan if required so they can deliver the learning as they see fit.”

**The Gija program has been designed intentionally to provide both structure and flexibility to how it is delivered.** The school has recognised the need to work closely with elders, language speakers, and other organisations that are working with Gija language and culture.

### A structured yet flexible plan

“A lot of our Gija staff have additional commitments outside of school to family and other agencies. This means we can occasionally be short staffed during Gija lesson time. This would often lead to not running any lesson on this day in Gija. After talking to the school board, principal, Elders and Gija teachers we have put a plan in place to keep the Gija learning alive during these times. What we do now is have a specific program in place where each class has a kit to deliver learning Gija. This kit will often allow students to become the language teachers and gives them the chance to practise their language skills.”

The program has been designed to run the language and culture program independently, to work around availability of knowledge holders and elders.

The program schedule is planned out for each term and then colour coded, so that staff know what activities need to happen on-country, what ones need to have Elders present.

**“With our planning document, if something is highlighted in green that means we have an excursion for this week and if it is highlighted in yellow, we must have an Elder present. We try to have Elders every week but if a week is highlighted in yellow and we do not have an Elder, we can not run this session and we use an activity from our classroom kit. In our program, quite a few of our lessons are highlighted yellow as these are vital to have an Elder and if they are not available, it’s not going to happen.”**

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“Last year in 2017 we put a Gija plan in place which staff were happy with as it helped everyone to know what to expect and support the learning. This year (2018) the next step for us is to keep the plan running even when we are short-staffed and we don’t have the full network that we usually require. That way if Elders are away and Gija staff are away due to other commitments and circumstances, teachers can still be learning with the students.”

“We believe that each part of our Gija program is very rich and deep and it’s impossible for students to know everything so we repeat a similar program each year to really deepen their understanding and skills. We adjust the delivery and the timeline to make our practices better and engaging but this also helps new students to be part of our program and doesn’t become boring for our long term students.”

**“This year in Term 1, the focus has been Getting to know Gija kinship and interacting in Gija with a focus on conversational skills.**

**In Term 2, the focus is on Ceremony and Objects including weapons, tools and cooking items.**

**In Term 3, the focus is on Country and Seasons where we look at the changes in the country, the sky, the animals, the plants and the landscape.**

**In Term 4, the focus is Celebrating Songs and Stories in Gija.**

**We do most of our bush trips in Term 2 and Term 3 as this is when the weather is best to do so.”**

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## Gija is part of daily school routines

Gija is incorporated into daily school routines, and students are encouraged to be active speakers and teachers of the language to each other.

“For example right now we are making flash cards for a card matching game using Gija sentences. In this game, we would get our strongest Gija speakers and we have a lot of great Gija speakers amongst our students to be modelling the language and then this allows the rest of the students to learn and practise using these sentences. The teachers can still help with word order but they are not modelling the language. This means the students are still speaking Gija, they’re still practising Gija and our Gija program is still functioning despite having staff and Elders away.”

The overall structure to the Gija program is expected to be similar each year.

**“Transiency between schools and communities tends to be a common theme for a few of our students. We look at all of learning as collaborative and our program model allows our students that already know**

**parts of our language to become the models to the students who don’t know and this makes it inclusive for everyone. This is helping our students to become leaders in Gija language and culture.”**

Where there are opportunities students join in with cultural activities in nearby communities.

“Warmun is a community nearby and we are all same language. So everything that happens there we go in. If Junba happening we go in, if there’s anything to do with culture we get invited to go so it’s all happening around the kids.”

## Who designs and runs Aboriginal Culture programs and activities at the school?

The Gija language and culture program has been developed as a collaboration between key Gija knowledge holders who work in the school as ATA’s, consultation with elders, the Teaching and Learning

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Coordinator and a linguist advisor.

Linguist Anna Crane is based in Sydney doing a doctorate and provides support for planning and content via phone and Skype.

“As the Teaching and Learning Coordinator, I help to create the resources and planning documents and I gather all of the resources in one place. Three of our four teachers this year (2018) are graduates and not from this area so it has been a big transition for them. The more support we can give them, the more they can understand the content and implement the practices better. This will help to build relationships and run a successful program.”

## Who else is important to making culture programs work at the school?

“Anna Crane is a linguist who used to live up this way. Now she is in Sydney studying a PHD but still visits regularly and supports the school language program in many ways. We talk often on the phone and have Skype sessions. Her partner used to be a teacher here so he understands the curriculum side of learning so they make a good team for putting resources together. We go through our planning with her and

she helps us to make a language progression plan to go with the lesson themes. We go through this plan with Sophia Mung who is a Gija teacher in our school to check language and spelling is correct or if there is any new words or phrases she would like us to add. Then we introduce the language to the students in our Gija lessons. In our school, for environmental print and in our school work we try to have Gija writing in blue, English in black and Kriol in red. This is to help establish code-switching and this is a system that the kids know well.”

**“I told the Principal that we need the elders. We want them here whenever we can get them. Because I don’t feel comfortable without them. I need some of them old people here when we doing a new activity. I feel comfortable with them teaching it first and then I come behind.”**

Having elders participate in school classes helps to grow the cultural authority of the next generation of cultural knowledge

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holders. It helps young students to understand the lines of cultural authority and their roles in them.

**“It’s important for those young people to see that line so when it’s my time to step up they respect me, you know. And I feel comfortable with the elders there, you know, because they can say, ‘no, no, you don’t put it like that, you put it like this, if you’ve got a sentence’.**

**“I think to make it strong we need to have all the old people here with us.**

**And then some days they can't come so that's okay, we've already did something with them last week so we just add to the other activity.”**

In addition to Gija speaking elders there are a number of advisors and supporters who play a role in designing material, resources and curriculum links for the Gija program at Purnululu Aboriginal Independent Community School. These included language specialists working with AISWA.

**“In our school we want the Gija people to be the driving force behind the program. Part of my job is to make sure the learning can be documented and meeting the needs of the West Australian Curriculum. This is easy to do because our Gija program is comprehensive.”**

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## Networking and Sharing with other people working on Gija Language and Culture

Staff from the Purnululu Aboriginal Independent Community School participate in Gija Language meetings, that have been set up as a way to link together different groups and people who are working on supporting Gija language and culture. The meetings are intended to bring together people from schools on Gija country, including Purnululu and the Catholic school in Warmun, the Early Learning Centre and Arts Centres also based in Warmun.

Linguist Anna Crane and her partner have built and maintain a website called *Jarraggirrem* (<https://www.jarraggirrem.org/>) to facilitate the access and sharing to Gija language and culture materials and resources.

“The whole point of this website is all the resources are kept here so anything I’ve created or Warmun School has created or Paul and Soph have created, in terms of teaching Gija is going to be all located on this website so everyone has the access. The whole drive behind us having this is sharing it, trying to get the language used and work with each other.”

**“Gija language is being revitalised now but for the last 60 000 years Gija people have been the leaders of their language and culture and we just want this to continue from generation to generation.”**

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## Challenges

**“You don’t really hear these old people talking Gija much anymore now. They do maybe themselves ... I don’t know how much they talk with the younger generation. We need to record all these Gija sessions. No one’s there with the camera or anything. We need to get them all documented and put away.”**

Gija is a language that is highly endangered, with only a few fluent speakers. Some of the Aboriginal staff working in the school and closely involved in teaching the Gija culture and language program are learning themselves. Financial and logistical support to ensure elders and fluent speakers can come and participate in the school is very important to supporting inter-generational learning and confidence in Gija.

**“When linguist, Anna visited, she found levelled readers in Gija. They are written in the old way of spelling. Electronic copies have been made and we are working towards editing the language to reflect one way of spelling. Frances Kofod is working with Elders and Gija people to bring out a new Gija dictionary in the next couple of years which Anna is helping with. The dictionary will be using the same spelling system that the new readers will use. It is important for the children to have access to these books so it is a priority to have them ready for use.”**

Over the years the fragility of Gija language has posed a challenge to the Gija program at Purnululu Aboriginal Independent Community School, not just because of the challenge of resourcing and accessing appropriate culture knowledge holders. It is sometimes questioned as to the risks and benefit of putting lots of energy into a language that is so fragile,

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and support for the program has been very dependent on the attitude of the school Principal at any given time.

However the school board feels it is very important that Gija language and culture is actively supported in the school, and the current approach to structuring language and culture together around key concepts such as seasons, kinship, bush food and medicine and cultural stories, songs and dances help to strengthen Gija language in young people.

## Benefits

### Gija, English & Maths - three curriculum pillars

Having Gija language and culture as one of the three curriculum pillars of the Purnululu Aboriginal Independent Community School offers a clear benefit to the cultural identity and cultural strength of students in the school and the broader community. It is important to the older generations who are aware of the loss of skills and knowledge related to their country and culture that previous models of formal education contributed to.

Having Gija language and culture in the school provides important access points to

students to grow their knowledge of language, culture and country. This knowledge is considered vital by the community in the post native title determination era as students at Purnululu school will be the future generations that must speak for their language and culture.

“It was good for us to learn how to write Gija because that’s where it helps us who do it with this lot of kids. But growing up I used to speak it. It was just my first language, you know. After I went to school we were learning this foreign language (English).”

“Well – the good thing about us mob here we got two Aboriginal ATAs in the class so we work with the Kartiya teacher after we’ve been on country. We say how can we do this with your little expert and with us mob and then we try and make the kids understand. So if we went for ochre we come back into the class and say, ‘oh hey, you know, what for we go get ochre? What do they use it for?’ And the kids see that every time they go for Junba, corroboree, or when somebody doing art. It’s just not like used for just anything. There’s a purpose for everything”

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**“When we go on country  
we want to show them – we  
want them to actually speak  
when they are on country.**

**They don’t have to speak  
like in a full sentence they  
can just name things.**

**If we’re going for fishing or  
we’re going hunting we just  
want them to just say a few  
little words out on country,  
what they know so that they  
can come back and do  
something in the class about  
the experiences on country  
and just keep adding to it  
with us, you know, with our  
help.**

**And with the old people.”**



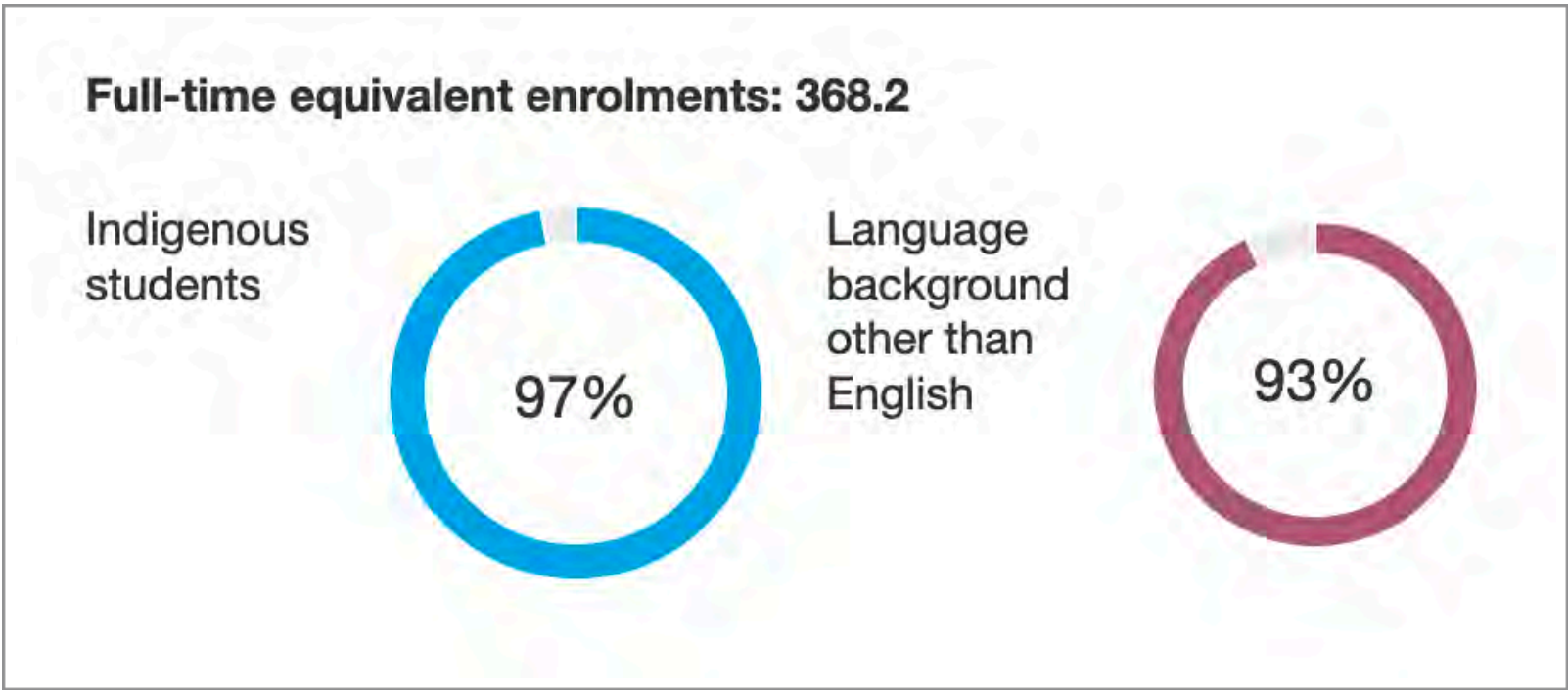
# Case Study 4 Halls Creek District

\*PLEASE NOTE: Due to research protocols established for this study quotes drawn from interviews do not identify the speaker. All quotes in this report are drawn from interviews with school staff or from responses to the survey.

Halls Creek District High School is an state school is located in the town of Halls Creek in the East Kimberley. Classified as a very remote school, it teaches students from Kindergarten to Year 12. In 2018 the school had a total of 34 teaching staff (34 FTE teaching staff) and 29 Non-teaching staff (25.6 FTE non-teaching staff).

**“I’ve looked at the patterns of 35 years of education in the Kimberley. What’s the same and what hasn’t changed? The things that are the same are that these kids are being taught by non-Indigenous personnel. So what needs to change here? Well, the next biggest step is that we need to build our local Aboriginal people from this town to become teachers of their own children. That’s where school leadership needs to focus, I believe.”**

## Halls Creek District High School demographics 2018



The infographic above is taken from the My School website 2018 <https://myschool.edu.au/school/48234>

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## Approach to School-based Aboriginal culture programs

### Year group and gender specific Culture Camps

Over the past few years Halls Creek District High School has been building up a program of culturally based on-country excursions for students. In 2018 it began with a focus on Kindy and pre-primary students. This initiative worked in collaboration with parents and the Kimberley Language Resource Centre, who facilitated elders and cultural knowledge holders to identify areas with different stories that the students could visit.

“So we get elders from in the community they say, okay, this rock represent this or the tree means that. That was all good last year.”

In 2019 this program is planned to expand to other year groups, with the goal being to work towards on-country cultural camps for every year group, each school term. The Kindergarten to Year 4 students will do day trips and the Years 5-12 students will camp over night, going on gender and year group specific camps, (girls going to one place, boys to another).

**“Starting this year (2019) we have three camps per term just with all the high school kids. They have their first camp out with Year 7 at Ord River. They were trying to get elders involved and give them a bit of history on the place.”**

“Because of the nature of our environment it’s kind of a bit hot to be taking kids out to country (in term 1). Later on it gets even hotter so we’ve kind of got a window of term 2 and 3 really. We’ll be focusing a lot more during that time because the weather is more conducive to taking kids out. You know, being able to mitigate risk and so forth.”

The kids share the job of inviting parents and community members to come along on cultural camps with Aboriginal staff in the school.

**“We told the students, ‘Go and talk, go and invite somebody that you think would like to come along. Somebody of influence’. Because it’s about**

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**building those relationships. And for us to be able to send teachers off (on-country) too, because sometimes they get boxed in or they lock themselves in their rooms. It's a way that we can get them out."**

## Aboriginal Language classes for Primary students

Primary students at Halls Creek District High School participate in regular Gooniyandi language classes. An Aboriginal staff member is training through the WA Dept of Education Indigenous Language Teachers traineeship, and running the language classes.

"A lady in the front office delivers the Gooniyandi program at school. One of the reasons why she wanted to do this program was because there's training around learning a language so she can speak and hear a language. She wanted to try and keep fresh. I know she was talking this year about doing Jaru too, while her mum can provide her with some of that language support here in town."

Culture days and cultural activities with other organisations

"We do a culture day once every term or so, that's something that our Aboriginal staff want to run."

Where it is possible Halls Creek District High School partners with other organisations to support cultural activities for students. When there are existing programs run by other organisations that the school can build into their timetable this can be an effective way to support school-based cultural activities.

**"The Kimberley Language Resource Centre had a men's group so we took our high school engagement boys across and they sat with their old fellows and they made boomerangs and didgeridoos. They actually went out, identified the trees, cut the tree, so they done everything from scratch with the elders there."**

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## NAIDOC day

NAIDOC day is the biggest culturally focussed event at Halls Creek District High School. The whole school participates and community and other organisations are invited in too. Usually there is a smoking ceremony at the beginning, an assembly and then a range of cultural activities.

**“Sometimes when we have NAIDOC we get the older kids to actually be leaders and support the little kids. So we try to put them with the smaller ones so the bigger kids show leadership and help the little kids. They participate and they, you know, they want to help and they join in and stuff.”**

## Cultural Induction for staff

Aboriginal staff run a cultural induction for new teachers at Halls Creek District High School.

**“So we have a day when we chuck (new teachers) on the bus or whatnot and take them for a drive around town and identify all the areas and groups.”**

Who designs and runs Aboriginal Culture programs and activities at the school?

The Aboriginal Education Officers work together to design and run most of the cultural activities and programs at Halls Creek District High School. The Principal works with this group to help to resource the approach identified by Aboriginal staff.

**“The staff will say what they want and what they need to make that difference, to make those changes, to make that move forward, and then my job is to work out how to balance that through.”**

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Who else is important to making culture programs work at the school?

## Local Organisations

There are a range of local organisations who have played a role in supporting language and culture activities at Halls Creek District High School. Where possible the school partners with local groups and organisations, however it can be a challenge to fit activities and priorities of other organisations into the timetable.

## Elders

Elders and other knowledge holders are also really important to making sure school-based cultural and language activities work.

**“When we have any events happening – like with my mum for example if I call her in and ask her to do a smoking ceremony, you know, she’s up and willing all the time. So she comes and do smoking. When**

**we had our NAIDOC day last year I got elders in as well to do a storytelling.**

**The old people, the elders, they came in and it was a good experience because a lot of them were the stolen generation so when they came in and told their stories, you know, it was really good and really an ear opener for these kids.”**

## Arts & Development Organisations

Halls Creek High School has made some long term partnerships with arts and other organisations that help support the teaching of Aboriginal language and culture.

**“This is our tenth year with G-OZ (Girls from OZ program). Like G-OZ came and they did the ‘I am Australian’ song and they translated it into the two local**

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**languages. So they got elders from the community to come in and help translate and help the kids learn those languages.”**

## Challenges

### Time and communication

The demands on schools and school staff in the Kimberley are very high. Halls Creek District High School is delivering a program from K-12, with a highly transient student population. Because of this the staff report that one of the biggest challenges to implementing Aboriginal language and culture programs across the school is lack of time.

**“It’s easy to get hold of funding. It’s really hard to get hold of time because there’s a lot of requests put on this staff. There’s a lot of expectations and time constraints put on this staff. There’s only a certain number**

**of people with a certain amount of time so – I don’t think it’s about funding.”**

“I mean if a school principal or if the community decided that going out on country was more important than hiring another English teacher to me there’s no argument about it because it’s not my school and not my kids. It’s a community school and it’s community kids. So the school has to service what the community wants and that’s got to be the paramount part of that. But it’s about time. So we can only do so much we can do in a certain period of time.”

### Forward planning in uncertain circumstances

The challenge of budgeting for staffing levels and for excursions is high for a school like Halls Creek District High School as there are many unpredictable aspects that have to be factored in. Transient student numbers are a particular challenge as students move in and out to other communities throughout the school year.

“Camps, excursions, and learning on country stuff. We just plan for it. I need to

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guess how many kids I've got coming and work that out when you've got 60% transient students in the school."

## Supporting Aboriginal language learning throughout the community

There are multiple Aboriginal languages spoken in and around Halls Creek. Social change and population mobility continues to disrupt traditional modes of language transmission, and this poses a challenge, both to the school and to the broader community.

"Communities need help with direct instruction around their languages and they need to be able to develop a plan around formalising how they transfer that within schools. I mean people still understand their languages and they can still hear it and they can still speak it but it's the transfer of that into the new generation (that is the challenge) because the kids don't appreciate it if they don't see it within a context like that.

Where does that (language) transfer happen? It doesn't happen in a classroom. It happens out there. It happens out there on the field. You know if you want to learn how to speak Kriol go and play basketball for four months out here. You'll learn Kriol. You'll pick it up like that..."

**"You learn your language transferring through activities that are important. You don't learn it sitting in a classroom holding up signs saying, you know, 'walga, walga, walga, walga'. You don't learn like that. You learn it by going and catching a frog.**

**You learn around campfires. You learn it around telling the stories. You learn it around being immersed in it. And we don't have that model at our school. We don't have that model in the Kimberley and we certainly don't have that model supported by government, Federal government and that's how it should be."**

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“When I was a little kid we used to have camps with old people, and they’d take us out on country. We had more back there then what’s now. It change, yeah. But slowly it coming back into it now thanks to our Principal.... You also had elderly women back in those days who wanted to come in and teach. They’ve died now... All our elders are passing has made a big impact as well.. ”

## Flexibility and prioritising Indigenous staff

A key focus of the school is building Aboriginal leadership and educators. This is seen as essential to the overall goal of building capable adults through school education.

“We just need to have more Aboriginal staff to deliver culturally based education because if we’re generating a community of capable young adults, which is what schools should be doing, then surely they should be mentored by capable adults from the community. To me that is a no brainer. So what do we sacrifice? Last year we sacrificed a level 3 deputy position in the High School and increased our AEIO budget by two so we’ve got two extra AEIO staff in the High School. I figure if we’ve got more adult leaders in the school we don’t need to have some other dude kicking around the office.”

## Benefits

A strong rationale for supporting Aboriginal culture and language in Halls Creek District High School has to do with valuing and modelling Indigenous leadership and knowledge. By showing the value of local knowledge, skills and history it helps students to recognise strength and possibility within the community and culture that they live.

**“We talk about the value of learning and there’s a misconception that learning in a classroom is more important than learning on country and learning about the stories from our people, you know, from the people who have been on this country for a long time.”**

“What’s important in a young person’s life in Halls Creek it is exponentially completely different to what’s important in terms of learning for a kid down in Perth. You know, I went to Perth and I only found out three years ago that that

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was a site where Yagan was born. Now, Yagan is one of the south west's biggest Aboriginal sort of icons. You know, his head was returned – it was taken over to England and it was returned, you know, like a big thing. But he was born like just the down the road from where I spent some of my formative years and that wasn't taught at my school. Because in my school it wasn't important."

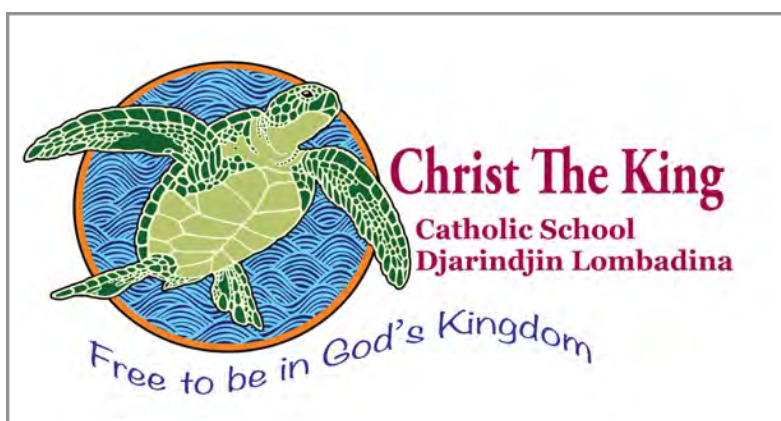
Building upon the WA Department of Education Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework, the focus at Halls Creek District High School is on building cultural leadership and transfer through its approach to education.

**"Culture is a subject... You can pick up a syllabus and you can see what the outcomes are and you can address the needs of that subject. Pick up a culture camp or pick up bush foods in itself, that's a syllabus content. That's okay.**

**But that big brushstroke of what is cultural transfer? What do we mean by building capacity of cultural leaders in**

**our community? What does that look like? And what are the benchmarks? What are the indicators that that's actually being achieved?**

**The (Aboriginal cultural standards ) framework allows us to make judgements about our journey – about our effectiveness within those sets of parameters and I think that's an important part of it."**



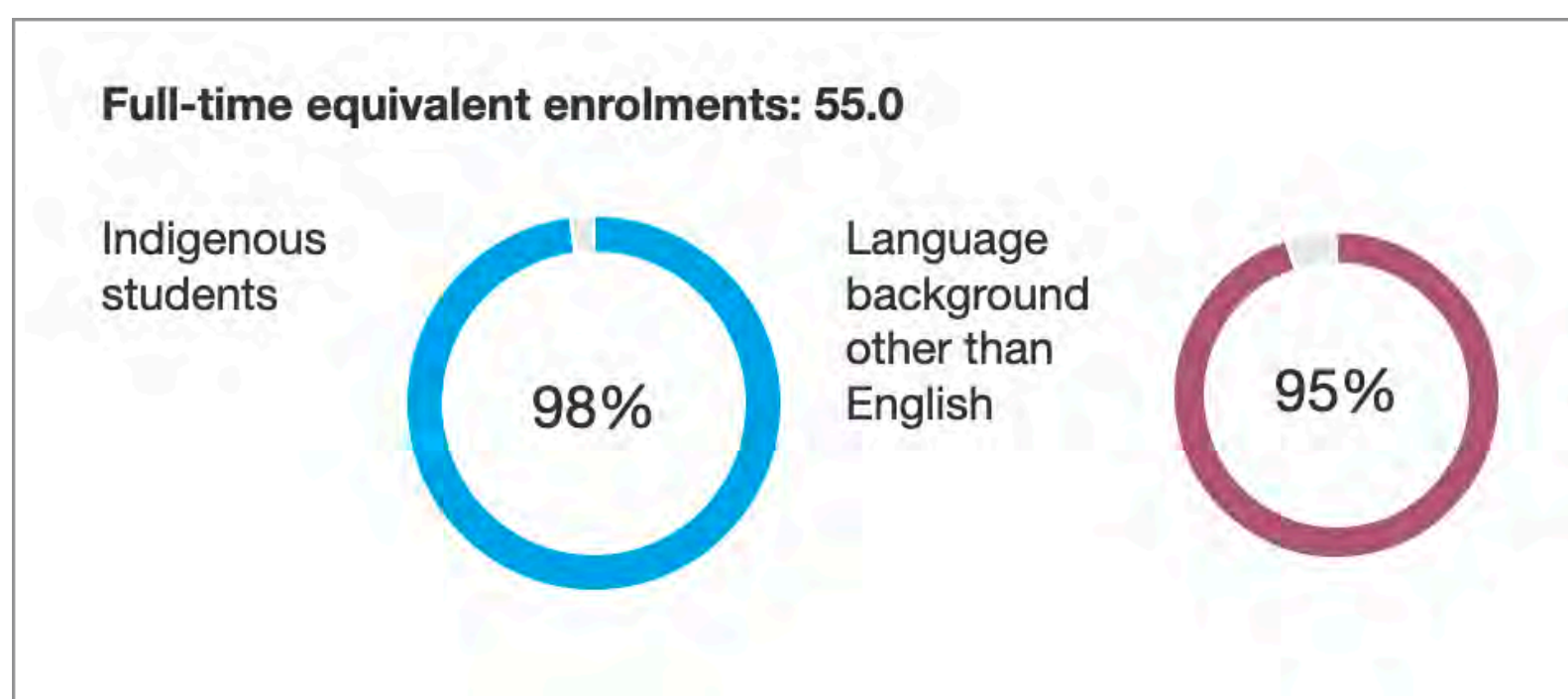
Christ the King Catholic School (Lombadina) is a Catholic school located in Lombadina community on the Dampier Peninsula of WA. It is classified as a very remote school and teaches students from Pre-Primary to Year 10. In 2018 the school has a total of 8 teaching staff (8 FTE teaching staff) and 13 non-teaching staff (10.6 FTE non-teaching staff).

## Case Study 5

# Christ the King Catholic School (Lombadina)

**“Students need to carry culture on from Elders as they are the next leaders. We want them to be proud of their own culture, not feel they have to follow another.”**

### Christ the King Catholic School demographics 2018



The infographic above is taken from the My School website 2018 <https://myschool.edu.au/school/48914>

\*PLEASE NOTE: Due to research protocols established for this study quotes drawn from interviews do not identify the speaker. All quotes in this report are drawn from interviews with school staff or from responses to the survey.

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# Approach to School-based Aboriginal culture programs

## Bardi Language Program

A Bardi language program was begun for students in Kindergarten to Year 3 at Christ the King Catholic School in 2018. Students get 1 hour of Bardi class each week. The intention is to extend the language program to other years incrementally, ie to Year 4 in 2019 and to Year 5 in 2020.

Most students in the school already have conversational Bardi skills. The school uses strategies such as games, quizzes and a Word of the Week program to help refresh the Bardi knowledge the kids already have.

## Weekly Culture Program

Christ the King Catholic school runs a weekly culture program for all students. Culture classes run on Friday mornings, with an hour for students in Years K-3 and another 1 hour session for students in Years 4-10.

Activities in these weekly sessions are organised by the Aboriginal Teaching Assistants (ATAs). Activities include things such as bush food excursions; seed collecting with local Indigenous Rangers; learning and singing songs in Bardi; and hosting guest speakers to talk about local culture and history. School-based culture activities are run in Bardi language as much as possible. During culture classes non-Indigenous teachers are the assistants to the Aboriginal Teachers Aids running the activities.

## Clan based trips to Country

The weekly culture program is generally run in year groups, but once a term the school organises clan based visits to Country. During these events students are organised in their Bardi clan groups across school years, and excursions are organised to relevant Country for that clan group. This may involve visiting family blocks, going on reef trips or to other places of significance for that clan. This initiative has had very strong support from community members. Community and family members who host and facilitate clan based excursions are thanked with a gift or a voucher rather than paid for their time.

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## NAIDOC Week

The school arranges an entire week of activities to celebrate NAIDOC each year. In 2018 this included a range of cultural and arts activities, as well as talks from local Indigenous Rangers; a tree-planting ceremony for people who have lost family members; craft and art projects such as kite-making; the launch of a cultural story book made with the students; cultural dance performances by the children; presentation of awards to students for good performance across all curriculum areas, including culture; and a community cultural lunch.

## Developing cultural resources

The school is aiming to grow its culture and language resources through the creation of books and e-books to capture and share language and culture. They have begun this process by getting children to speak and record themselves with an iPad, talking about themselves in Aboriginal English as well as in Standard Australian English. This can then be transcribed into simple ebooks for use within the school.

## Cultural Induction for new teachers

New teachers coming to the school are provided a cultural induction. This is done through the school collaborating with local Aboriginal cultural tour providers. Non-Indigenous teachers are also supported through being encouraged to discuss any cultural issues or questions with the Aboriginal Teachers Aid Coordinator and other Aboriginal staff in the school.

## Leadership team for culture program

All cultural programming is coordinated by the ATA coordinator. This position is somewhat unique at Christ the King Catholic School, in that the ATA coordinator functions as an equivalent to a Deputy Principal with a strong focus on leading and capacity building of ATA's across the school.

There is also a strong focus on student leadership across the school. A leadership team has been formed for the cultural program, including ATA's and students, who play a role in planning and implementing the cultural program.

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## Mapping culture across the curriculum

Christ the King Catholic School is seeking to map approaches to integrating local Aboriginal culture into the curriculum at a very high level. The school has been drawing on the Northern Territory Aboriginal Curriculum Framework, then taking the ACARA national curriculum and cross curriculum priority areas and mapping the schools approach to culture across the whole curriculum.

Using the HASS themes of self, others and environment, the Principal and the ATA Coordinator have been working closely to embed the HASS curriculum through their approach to implementing a culture program.

## Developing cultural competency across the school

Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) uses a cultural competency framework to support staff and schools to work better with Indigenous students and communities. Like all Catholic Schools in the Kimberley, Christ the King Catholic School is supported by an Aboriginal Education Consultant employed by CEWA to tailor plans for increasing the

cultural competency of the school within an annual plan. Individual staff are also encouraged to use a cultural competency checklist to self-assess. They can then develop an approach to growing their cultural competency in identified areas.

Christ the King Catholic School has developed formal partnerships with the local community which assists in strengthening their approach to Aboriginal culture and language programs in the school. They are also focussing on supporting pathways for leadership of the Aboriginal staff in the running of the school. The ATA Coordinator is a key part of the school leadership team with the Principal and non-Indigenous Deputy Principal.

**“I want the school to operate so white teachers can come and go, but the ATA’s really run the school.”**

The ATA Coordinator has been doing a lot of coaching with ATA staff. This has included training and professional development with ATA’s in areas such as facilitation to build their confidence and skills.

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## Who designs and runs Aboriginal Culture programs and activities at the school?

The language and culture programs at Christ the King Catholic School are led by the ATA Coordinator, who effectively functions as a Deputy Principal to Aboriginal staff.

Working with the ATA Coordinator is a Culture leadership team, which includes staff and students who help with planning and implementation.

ATA's bring important cultural and community knowledge that informs the approach to school-based culture and language activities. In addition to connecting through their community networks, they play an important role in communicating timing and issues that teachers and the broader school need to know about Law time, such as road closures and no go zones.

## Who else is important to making culture programs work at the school?

Local families support on Country activities throughout the year and are invited to participate in school culture activities.

Indigenous Rangers come and participate in activities, including NAIDOC week celebrations.

## Challenges

Accessing Bardi language resources is challenging. At the time of the research there were only 3 Bardi dictionaries in the school and they are now out of print.

Although all the ATA's and students in the school have personal connections to Bardi finding confident Bardi speakers to run language and culture classes can be a challenge. The school is interested in finding ways to support the training of language teachers. Where possible they have supported staff to participate in language teacher networking and conferences.

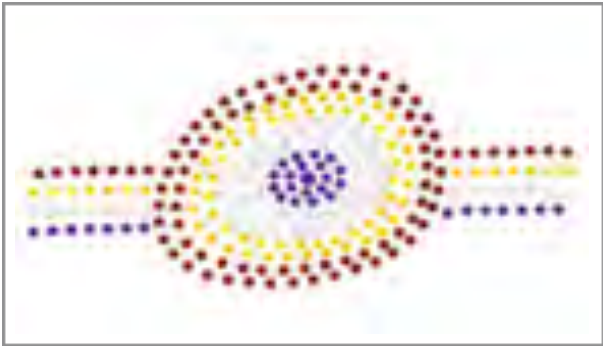
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# Goals

Christ the King Catholic School would like to work with a curriculum designer to formalise and finalise a language and culture curriculum.

They are investigating how to build a Bardi website to host and share resources for teaching and learning about Bardi language and culture

Across the Dampier Peninsula there are several other schools in the Catholic and State system who are seeking to support Bardi language and culture. Christ the King Catholic School in Lombadina would like to build networking opportunities with other schools working on Bardi culture and language.



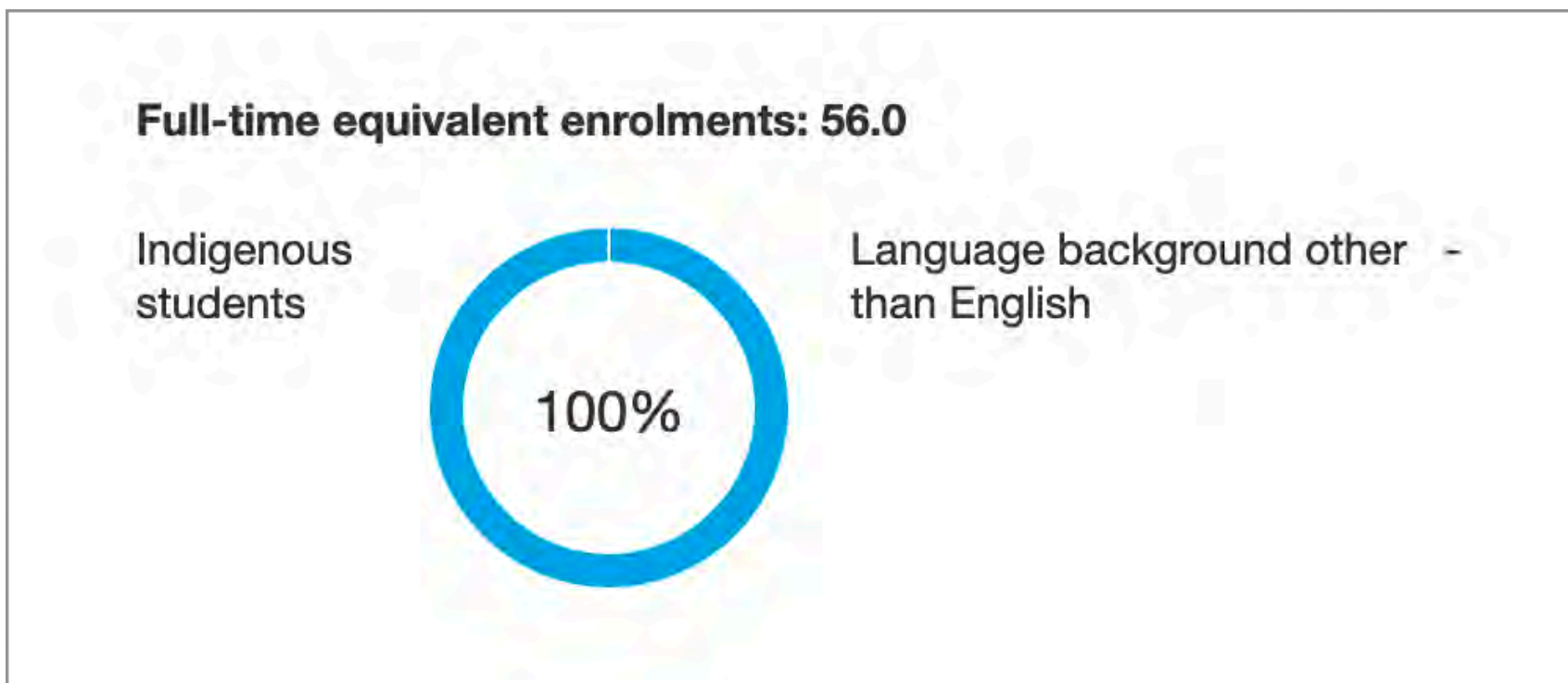
## Case Study 6

# Yiramalay / Wesley Studio School

Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School is an independent school located in the Fitzroy Valley of Western Australia. Classified as a very remote school, it teaches students from Year 10 to 12. According to the 2018 figures on the My School website, the school has a total of 12 teaching staff (10.8 FTE teaching staff) and 24 non-teaching staff (23.1 FTE non-teaching staff).

**“We’re changing two communities. We’ve got this one here on Bunuba Country and you’ve got the Wesley community.”**

### Yiramalay / Wesley Studio School demographics 2018



The infographic above is taken from the My School website 2018 <https://myschool.edu.au/school/50560>

\*PLEASE NOTE: Due to research protocols established for this study quotes drawn from interviews do not identify the speaker. All quotes in this report are drawn from interviews with school staff or from responses to the survey.

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## Approach to School-based Aboriginal culture programs

Yiramalay / Wesley Studio School was established to support both education of Aboriginal students on Bunuba Country, as well as provide a context to provide Aboriginal cultural education to non-Indigenous students from Wesley College in Melbourne. It grew out of a long term partnership between Bunuba people from the Fitzroy Valley and Wesley college that began in 2004 and was founded on cultural learning exchanges. Prior to Yiramalay /Wesley Studio School being established in the Kimberley, elders collaborated with Wesley College to set up a language and culture program for Year 4 & 5 students at Wesley College, taking elders to Melbourne to teach Bunuba and Wamajarri language and culture. This program continues today.

### A residential school on Country

Yiramalay / Wesley Studio School, established in 2010, provides residential Year 10-12 level education for approximately 60 Aboriginal students,

from around the Kimberley, other parts of WA and beyond.

**“When the school was set up Wesley College was looking for somewhere they could go where they could help Aboriginal people preserve language and culture, but also for the Wesley students to learn about Aboriginal culture. It’s very much two-way learning.”**

Yiramalay provides residential education to Aboriginal students and across the school year they host cultural inductions for 120 Year 10 students from Wesley College.

Yiramalay/ Wesley Studio School has developed its own curriculum approach based on three circles of learning. These are personal and cross-cultural learning, industry and academic learning. They offer standard and advance streams programs.

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**“We call it ‘residential’ because it’s more about learning to live, it’s just trying to take that holistic approach, develop the whole person and give them skills.”**

## Two-Way Cultural Induction Programs

Each year students at Wesley College apply for 120 places to take part in one of five or six 3-week cultural inductions held annually at the Yiramalay school. Students from Wesley College pay to attend an induction, helping to subsidise the costs of running the school for Aboriginal students.

Aboriginal students who are starting in the residential program at Yiramalay also participate in the cultural inductions as part of their orientation and trial period at the school.

“What happens is (our new Aboriginal students) come for three weeks. They will do an interview (with staff) and maybe spend a bit more time here. If they are new then they do the induction and it may not start for another three weeks. It’s good to get them here, settle, learn the routine. Some of them haven’t had good school attendance so once they have done

induction and graduate it they will have actually done five weeks here.”

The cultural induction follows a similar structure each time it is run.

## Week One

**“The over-arching form of the first part is learning about the seasons and Aboriginal culture. We get Elders out, they come from Bunuba as well but from Muludja and Gooniyandi. They come out and they sit down and they talk to all the students. We have an Elder come out and he does art with them as well. They learn about skin groups and relationships.”**

“That’s all delivered by Aboriginal people. Sometimes we allow students to do it now, but sometimes we get an Elder or one of our mentors to do it. We’ve got one proud Bunuba student at the moment and they always do a Welcome to Country.”

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## Week Two

“The second week is go out and see it. They might go to Wangkajangka School where they’ll meet up with a local Elder and learn a bit more about Aboriginal culture. The Wesley students might do some reading with the little students, they’ll give something back to the school. Other boys might kick a football around or do something. It’s about seeing an Aboriginal community. What is it like meeting some of the Elders while they’re there?”

Then it’s Tunnel Creek. We work with local cultural tours and Elders to do a tour of Tunnel Creek. They go to Windjana Gorge and they read the book together, the Jandamarra story.

For a lot of the Aboriginal students their reading is below standard, but they sit down next to a Wesley student and they read the Jandamarra book together. Then we show them the film. One of our senior mentors acted in the film with the ABC. They watch the film, they read the book, then suddenly they’re at Tunnel Creek, this is the real thing. It brings it to life.”

## Week 3

“The third week has changed a little bit. It was very focused on life on a cattle station, which it wasn’t really meant to be. (Now) it’s more about life and living in the Kimberleys. Students get out and do different things now. Sometimes they’ll do work on the cattle stations, they might be helping the community or they could be helping here running the school. It’s about giving back, but it’s also helping them think “What if I was to live here?” . Throughout the 3 weeks they are also ticking some boxes, asking “Well have I got an understanding of their story?” They do a log and they write up their experiences.”

## Learning for all members of the school

“So much learning goes on in those inductions. The Wesley and Yiramalay students might have music in common. They talk about different stories but the music is the same. They’re just teenagers and that’s all.

There’s a big learning for the staff. I remember one lady, a very good teacher. She walked down the road away from the school a few times thinking “I just can’t teach”. She’s been teaching 15 to 16 years.

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She spent six years employed with us and probably three or four teaching here. She tells me, “I’ve finally learnt how to teach. It’s because of what I learnt and what they taught me.”

## Supporting culturally sensitive teaching and learning

“We’re trying to put Aboriginal people in the classrooms. Give one of the Yolgnu students a piece of paper with English words on it, it doesn’t mean anything and the teacher thinks they can’t speak English. But they’ve got a language already and probably speak three languages other than English. If I’ve got an English-speaking Yolgnu mentor with them they will read it quickly and he’ll interpret and suddenly this bloke is top of the class.

We are trying to make the teachers very much aware of that, we bring in Aboriginal people to talk to our teachers and try and help them. I try and get Aboriginal mentors out of cohorts locally. I’m wanting to get someone from Roebourne too because we’ve got probably 10 or so students from there.

**“Our mentors are just not here to mentor the students, the bigger job is mentoring the staff and helping them understand.”**

We said, “How many of you know what language group the students that you are teaching come from?” They said, “Well we don’t know,” and I said, “You’d better learn”.

## Sharing cultural and language diversity and knowledge

“It’s all about helping someone, teaching them how to learn. We hear a number of students say, “I’m going back to talk to my grandfather”, so they’re going to learn the language. They’ve learnt now and they want to learn it, they’re hungry for it, where they probably went around the streets before.

I think that’s where we can help the languages. We can do more out here teaching and supporting language, we want to do more.

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**“We get a bit of jealousy every now and again around language. I’ll get one of the Bunuba Elders out here or someone like that, and they just tell them, “Look, these people are welcome from all these other languages. We have a boy from Peppimenarti here and there was some jealousy but then some one said, “No, a lot of our stories come from there, from Peppimenarti...”**

“We’re trying to work with Bunuba to get Bunuba people to come out and do a bit more Bunuban language, we’re working with them. We’re on Bunuba land so we’re not going to teach anything but Bunuba and Bunuba has got to deliver that. We’re just working out how we can deliver it better and package it up. (At the moment) we’re doing it in a very casual way at the moment, but we want to make it more formal.

**We think there’s a lot of sharing of language going on. It’s been really good having Yolgnu here, because they’re very fluent in Yolgnu and they speak Yolgnu around here all the time. They’re teaching some of our kids, they teach the white kids, they teach all the kids.”**

### Teaching local language

“We’ve got Bunuba people here that work here, some are better at language than others. (Other Bunuba people) come over and speak the language a bit every now and again, so they pick up words. We’re just starting off with places and objects . All the buildings are getting named and everyone in the school has to learn the names. A lot of the names are Bunuba words for trees or birds. What will happen is one student will say “Oh we’ve got Miraga that’s Bunuba name for bloodwood”, and the Yolgnu boys will say, “Oh we’ve got that same tree over there, we call it this” and so they compare.

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We are trying to create that stimulation to get people more involved in looking for their own language and then we'll get more people up to support that cross-cultural learning. We've had the grandmothers come up from Yindjabarndi as they're more fluent in it. One woman taught language before, so she spent a bit of time here with us. So we're hoping to do more of that, but to learn a language you need to understand the culture."

## Opportunities to study at Wesley College while maintaining connection to Country

"If they're doing the academic focused program they might want to do it in Melbourne. I've got a young girl now she's in Year 10 and she's gone into mainstream. Our students are not all in mainstream in Melbourne. We have a Yiramalay class in which some of them might do one or two mainstream classes."

Aboriginal students have to complete a minimum of two terms at Yiramalay before they get an offer to go to Melbourne.

"I've got 20 beds down there all year, so that allows anyone that's a bit academic or wants to push the boundaries to spend

time in Melbourne. But they all need to spend some time here back on Country so we bring them all back in Term 2. They'll spend at least three weeks here in Term 2 and maybe a week in Term 3. Some spend most of their time will be in Melbourne. We want them to spend their time up here on Country and they get a lot out of it.

For example yesterday one of the locals came with rib bones, and they are probably going to get a goanna. They can do all that when they are here at Yiramalay which is really important. It's great seeing the different students go out catching goannas, sharing the food together from the different language groups."

## Celebrating educational achievements with family and cultural leaders

"Every graduation we'll get Bunuba people out here, we bring the grandmothers up, and they come and celebrate with the students going through. Half of them mightn't be Bunuba, there might only be one Bunuba student on that induction but we just think that's so important for the local Elders to come take part.

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We also have people just calling in for dinner. We always give them a meal when they call in. Visitors will sit around the campfire and they will share knowledge and culture with all the kids.”

## Who designs and runs Aboriginal Culture programs and activities at the school?

The program is a collaboration between the Principal of Wesley College , the Director of Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School and a board comprised of Bunuba people and people from Wesley College.

The curriculum has been collaboratively developed to integrate culture and language and foster two-way learning between Aboriginal country and people and Wesley College community and school in Melbourne.

The program is also supported by academics advisors, including linguists who are invited to collaborate on approaches to curriculum.

## Challenges

### Formalising appropriate curriculum

“We’re trying to develop our own curriculum for Year 10. 11 and 12 yes. We’ll do a basic standard curriculum but Year 10 we’ve just applied to WA Department of Education for approval of a curriculum which is more suitable to us.

**“We are all about preparing people, teaching them how to learn. Once you teach a student how to learn they can learn their culture, they can learn another culture, they can learn maths if that’s what they want to learn, they can learn anything. So it’s really helping them learn and then making them hungry to learn.”**

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## Benefits\*

**“This one boy (from Wesley) went back and his mother wrote and said, “I was driving back from the airport with my son. I said what did you learn and he didn’t say anything”. She just kept driving the 40ks into the city wherever they live, and then he suddenly spoke up and said, “Mum, what I just experienced has changed my life forever. I know that it’s going to change the direction I take, how I go about things and what I train to do. ”**

“Most Wesley people, not all, but most say this is the best thing Wesley has ever done is partner with Bunuba.”

\* For further information on the Yiramalay Wesley Studio School see “The Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School - a different model of school and catalyst for change” 2015, Helen Drennen & Ned McCord, UNESCO Observatory Multi-Disciplinary Journal in the Arts, Vol. 4, Issue 1  
<http://www.wesleycollege.net/-/media/Files/Yiramalay/UNESCO%20Observatory%20Multi-Disciplinary%20Journal%20in%20the%20Arts.pdf>  
Accessed June 2019

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# 5

## Challenges and success factors

This section discusses the main challenges and success factors reported by research participants in both the survey and in case study interviews.

Challenges include:

- Lack of dedicated cultural program resources
- Time
- Reliance on endorsement of Principals
- High staff turnover
- Ensuring time and space for local Aboriginal culture in the curriculum
- Lack of coordination between schools
- Funding
- Regulatory and logistical challenges
- Issues with Community Engagement

Success factors identified by research participants include:

- Collaboration with community and cultural knowledge holders
- Empowerment and training of Aboriginal Staff
- Building Indigenous school leadership

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- Strong integration of local Aboriginal culture into curriculum and school
  - Ensuring consistency in cultural program delivery
  - Dedicated resources to support linkage between culture/language activities and curriculum
  - Formalising Aboriginal culture programs as a curriculum priority in the school
  - Dedicated culture program coordinator roles or culture leadership team
  - Explicit commitment from school leadership to valuing and embedding local culture as a core part of school values.
  - Dedicated time in both school timetables and in staff roles for culture programming
  - Dedicated physical space in the school for language and culture

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# Challenges to implementation of school-based Aboriginal culture programs in the Kimberley

Kimberley schools encounter many challenges in establishing and maintaining school-based Aboriginal culture programs. Many of these challenges are interconnected.

## Lack of dedicated cultural program resources

A significant challenge for schools running, establishing and, most critically, sustaining Aboriginal culture programs is the consistent lack of dedicated resources available within Kimberley schools (across all education sectors) for such Aboriginal cultural programming and activities. Necessary resources include far more than just funding and money. More critical resourcing needs include time, for in both school timetables and in the lives and schedules of key people involved in programs; learning materials and tools for teaching specific languages and cultures;

resources to support training of staff and community members; resources for coordination of programming, engagement with community members and linking activities to the mainstream curriculum.

## **“It’s not about money, it’s about time”**

### Time

Schools in the Kimberley are juggling many competing demands on their timetables and on staff time. School leaders indicated that the primary challenge related to Aboriginal cultural programming in their schools was deciding what other things would be sacrificed to make time in both school and staff timetables to support local Aboriginal cultural programming. Many participants in this research identified that the

\*This discussion draws on case study interviews and survey responses to Q47 “What challenges have you or your staff faced in establishing or sustaining collaborations with local Aboriginal community members to implement school based Aboriginal culture programs or activities?” and Q50 “What are the main challenges you or your staff face in undertaking and sustaining Aboriginal cultural activities in the school?”

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feasibility of school-based Aboriginal programs and activities relied heavily on the priorities set by school leadership and resulting commitments (or lack of commitment) of school time and resources to cultural programs.

## Reliance on endorsement of Principals

Schools report that willingness to establish and maintain strong school-based Aboriginal culture programs in the Kimberley relies heavily on the attitudes and leadership of individual school Principals.

Despite over arching Aboriginal Cultural Standards Frameworks (in the State system) and Cultural Competency Matrix (in the Catholic system) to guide schools and teachers in principles for engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and knowledge, there is little regionally coordinated support for developing and sustaining partnerships with local Aboriginal cultural knowledge holders to sustain school-based Aboriginal culture programs provided to schools in the Kimberley.

Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) maintains a Kimberley regional office with one Indigenous Education

Consultant who provides support to Catholic schools in the Kimberley in implementing the CEWA Cultural Competency Matrix.

Research respondents highlighted that even with such supporting frameworks the approach taken by schools in developing school engagement with local Aboriginal cultures and people is highly dependent on the priorities, values and skills of individual Principals.

At the time of the research the Western Australian Department of Education had disestablished the Kimberley Indigenous Education Unit. Several research participants highlighted that as a result communities and Aboriginal organisations wishing to engage with State schools in the Kimberley have no coordinated regional point of contact and must now liaise directly with individual schools and Principals.

**Due to the pivotal role Principals play in endorsing and supporting school-based Aboriginal culture programs in the Kimberley, changes in school leadership can significantly disrupt and de-stablise even establish school-based cultural programs.**

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**“Sustaining the language program is my main focus. It’s a delicate balance, especially when the leadership changes now and then. It never seems like a sure thing.**

**Like you think, right, we’ve got it nice and strong, it’s rock solid, people have good feeling for this program, it’s valued. The teachers value it. The students value it. It’s valued by the community and it’s supported by those around us.**

**But then that doesn’t mean anything really if the leader in the end wants to change it...”**

### High staff turnover

The challenges of high staff turnover was frequently mentioned by schools throughout this research. **For most Kimberley schools a significant portion of their teaching staff each year are new to the local community and so there is a constant process of establishing knowledge about and**

**relationships with the community and the local Indigenous culture.**

The effects of this are multiple, however respondents specifically mentioned **the strain high teaching-staff turnover puts on existing Indigenous and culturally literate staff who must continually train and induct new teachers.** This draws staff capable of planning and running culture programs away from this work, and can create significant instability when there are leadership changes in the school.

**“We’re mandated to implement the Western Australian Curriculum. Obviously one of the cross curriculum priorities is Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander’s culture and history. But I think it’s a little bit teacher dependent. We try and do it but it is also how knowledgeable teachers are and how willing and how able they are to kind of weave it in rather than see it as a separate thing.”**

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Respondents also highlighted the lack of formal and consistent processes to support the handover of cultural knowledge, and relationships with cultural knowledge holders and community leaders when staff are leaving. This is particularly critical when there is a handover between Principals.

## Ensuring time and space for local Aboriginal culture in the curriculum

The majority of schools that participated in this research reported that the demands of meeting curriculum and compliance requirements left little time in already busy timetables and overcrowded curriculum to find space and time for significant local Aboriginal cultural programming and activities.

**Creating space to include local Aboriginal culture in the mainstream curriculum was consistently mentioned as a major hurdle, especially for larger schools.**

**“It's quite a skill to leave space for language and culture because obviously you can't teach it (as a non-Indigenous**

**person). It's not your content.”**

**A number of surveyed schools noted the challenge of integrating specific pedagogical programs, such as direct and explicit instruction models, with school-based local Aboriginal culture programs.** Although models of direct instruction are not fundamentally incompatible with local Aboriginal cultural content, but participants reported the learning style is difficult to apply to cultural content other than language. More significantly the preparation and training time needed to establish direct instruction models was noted by several schools as preventing adequate investment in building and maintaining relationships, finding space in timetables and managing logistics needed for non-classroom based cultural activities.

Case studies such as Purnululu Aboriginal Independent School demonstrate approaches to prioritising culture in the curriculum on par with other curriculum elements such as literacy and numeracy. With dedication to curriculum mapping across learning goals identified by cultural knowledge holders and mandated

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curriculum requirements. This case study demonstrates that it is possible to find adequate space for a strong focus on Aboriginal culture and language and still meet Australian curriculum requirements.

**This research found that there are few consistent approaches to undertaking this cross-curriculum mapping in the Kimberley. The cultural frameworks and cross-curriculum priorities provided by the WA Department of Education, Catholic Education WA, and the ACARA Australian curriculum set a direction and priority for such work to occur, however the capacity for Kimberley schools to implement them locally, and consistently is constrained.**

Recent investments in Kimberley schools, such as through the Kimberley Schools Program, are supporting standardisation of delivery of curriculum across Kimberley schools, rather than resourcing schools to tailor content and delivery to local cultural contexts.

Due to the high turn over of teaching staff across Kimberley schools it is not realistic to rely on class-room teaching staff to have the expertise or capacity to facilitate this two-way curriculum development work.

As noted previously, Kimberley school-based Aboriginal culture programs rely heavily on Indigenous education support staff (ATA's, AEO's etc) for their design and implementation, Kimberley-based training programs for Aboriginal education support staff does not provide specific training in curriculum development. Similarly, most of the qualified class-room teachers working in the Kimberley are not from the region, and often have received little prior training about local Aboriginal cultures or history.

**Given the lack of training by Aboriginal support staff in curriculum development, and the lack of local Aboriginal cultural knowledge in many non-Indigenous class-room teachers, to effectively support inclusion of local Aboriginal cultural content across all learning areas schools must ensure strong collaborations between local cultural knowledge holders, Aboriginal staff and teaching staff with skills in curriculum development and mapping. Regional support and training in developing and sustaining such collaborative approaches is not currently available in the Kimberley.**

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**“As much as we try for a whole school focus and consistency there would be some teachers that find it really easy to weave it into their day and others that would find it a little bit more challenging. So I mean as much as we really do encourage teachers as much as possible to weave Aboriginal culture and language through, but due to the high staff turnover it is probably not as consistent.”**

## Lack of coordination between schools

Many schools identified a desire to connect with other schools undertaking school-based Aboriginal culture and language programs, especially where other schools are working with the same language and culture groups. The lack of regional coordination in approaches to integrating local Aboriginal culture into school-based teaching and learning means that there are no dedicated structures and few opportunities for school staff and community members involved in

school-based Aboriginal culture programs in the Kimberley to connect with each other to share good practice, tools, learning and resources.

Participants in this research identified the need for:

- Dedicated opportunities for schools working with the same cultural and language groups to network and share resources;
- Kimberley- based opportunities for language speakers and cultural knowledge holders to develop teaching skills;
- Opportunities for networking and sharing of good practice in school-based Aboriginal cultural programming across the Kimberley region. Such opportunities need to connect Indigenous cultural knowledge holders involved in or interested in being involved in school-based cultural programs, Indigenous teaching and support staff, and non-Indigenous teachers and school leaders.

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**“The most challenging part is that I don’t get the time to go and visit my colleagues in the area. I speak with my colleagues in different schools across the region, maybe 4 or 5 a term. But none of it’s exchanging learnings... You know, it’s more about that functionality as opposed to the exchanging our practice.”**

Despite the desire of many people involved in school-based Aboriginal cultural programs in the Kimberley to connect with each other and share practice and resources, community dynamics can make inter-community collaboration and sharing challenging.

**“Even the women who have produced resources in the past, that strong group I was talking about, they came back from a workshop and something happened and they said "Oh no, we won't share that with (another**

**community), these are our resources." Whereas I would have. You'd share far and wide. Whereas it was no, this is for us, this is for our kids.”**

## Funding

A significant challenge identified by Kimberley schools is accessing flexible funding for cultural programming. Where funding occurs there is little consistency in funding support across more than a few years. Of those schools who have created dedicated budgets for school-based Aboriginal culture programs the majority do so drawing on core school funds. Grant funding, especially from philanthropic sources, is time consuming, short term (one or two years) and difficult for schools to obtain as philanthropists are reluctant to fund activities (such as education) that are perceived to be the responsibility of governments.

**The effects of the lack of consistent and sufficient funding trickles down and influences almost all the other problems schools face when attempting to run or establish school-based Aboriginal culture programs, most significantly the lack of staff with the skills, knowledge and**

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## capacity to implement and sustain cultural programming.

Most schools participating in this research reported that limited resourcing for staff in general, and Aboriginal Teachers Aids and Aboriginal educators in particular posed a particular challenge for implementing and sustaining school-based Aboriginal culture programs and activities.

Some schools also specifically mentioned a general lack of resources (staff, materials, space, financing) as impacting on their capacity to implement school-based Aboriginal culture programs.

## Regulatory and logistical challenges

Departmental and legal regulations were frequently reported as an added challenge to implementing school-based Aboriginal cultural programs, especially in regard to on Country learning and excursions. Schools reported issues such as insurance requirements that limit forms of transport (such as using troop carriers to transport students); the need for a certain amount of staff with bronze medallion qualifications be on site during any school activities near bodies of water; regulatory limits on certain community members accessing schools and classrooms.

Some schools highlighted a lack of institutional support within their sector for addressing the logistical issues associated with running locally relevant school-based Aboriginal culture programs, noting that without clear institutional commitment to activities such as on-Country learning, logistical challenges can be very hard to overcome.

## Issues with Community Engagement

**“I hope I'm not speaking out of turn, but there's a bit of contest over the language because there's a couple of language groups there. Conflict about which one should they be teaching which means nothing gets taught and that's frustrating for the Principal. They would love there to be language but the contest around language is too hot to bring in to the school.”**

Many schools reported challenges establishing or maintaining engagement with local community members and local

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cultural knowledge holders. This issue is the most complex of all the problems reported. Schools identified many different issues with varying degrees of impact on culture programmes in schools. These included:

- a lack of consistency and passion from communities when engaging with the school;
- the competing interests of community members, especially during other cultural events like Law;
- confusion within the community over who should be teaching culture programs in the school;
- a lack of funding to support community members and cultural knowledge holders in sustainable roles and relationships with the school; and,
- a lack of knowledge holders and language speakers who can participate in planning, structuring and delivering culture programs.

**The challenge of finding knowledge holders and language speakers to work in school-based programs is not necessarily an absence of such people in the local community, although this is sometimes the case, but can arise**

**from a reluctance to participate in formal school structures, often shaped by the legacy of Aboriginal peoples historical experiences with education. Respondents also identified the common inability of the school to source and provide funding to cultural knowledge holders, legal/institutional restrictions on who is allowed to teach or be in schools, and lack of local training opportunities for cultural knowledge holders to develop skills for teaching in structured contexts as barriers to community engagement.**

**“I think it’s important that school leaders are able to mix it up, you know, to make things happen and value them. Some of our elders won’t give anything if they’re not feeling valued or like their word means anything, you know. I think it comes down to making those really true connections in the community that make the elders feel safe to share and feel that what they’re teaching about is just as**

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**important as any maths and English to the children of that community.”**

Another problem schools voiced is a perceived unreliability of some Aboriginal staff, community members and families which makes it very difficult to deliver stable, meaningful programmes.

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# Success factors and structural changes to support school-based Aboriginal culture programs\*

This research has identified a range of factors which contribute the strength and sustainability of school-based local Aboriginal culture programs in the Kimberley.

These include:

- Collaboration with community and cultural knowledge holders
- Empowerment and training of Aboriginal Staff
- Building Indigenous school leadership
- Strong integration of local Aboriginal culture into curriculum and school
- Ensuring consistency in cultural program delivery

One of the aims of this research was to understand the structural factors that support school-based Aboriginal culture programs in the Kimberley. Schools who are successfully implementing such programs have made a range of structural changes to do so.

These include:

- Dedicated resources to support linkage between culture/language activities and curriculum
- Formalising Aboriginal culture programs as a curriculum priority in the school
- Dedicated culture program coordinator roles or culture leadership team
- Explicit commitment from school leadership to valuing and embedding local culture as a core part of school values.
- Dedicated time in both school timetables and in staff roles for culture programming
- Dedicated physical space in the school for language and culture

These factors are clearly interlinked. The following section discusses each of these factors in more detail.

\*This discussion draws on case study interviews and survey responses to Q49 “In your opinion, what factors make school-based cultural activities most successful?” & Q48 “How have the structures, staffing and/or processes in the school changed in order to operationalise school-based Aboriginal cultural activities or programs?”

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## Success factors

### Collaboration with community

**“Success in these programs ultimately comes from building a strong relationship with the community and the people in it. The elders are the people that can speak for the things you want to promote within the school.”**

A strong, consistent and visible commitment to the local community within which a school is located is a critical factor for the success of Aboriginal culture programs in the Kimberley.

**Research participants identified the importance of schools and staff members demonstrating respect for community members knowledge and their skills and abilities as cultural leaders and knowledge holders.**

## Empowerment and training of Aboriginal Staff

**“Valuing your Aboriginal staff is important. The school can seem to be a bit of a hierarchy you know? Of course the classroom teacher is running the show, and but if they're working effectively with their Indigenous staff, cultural activities should be part of everyday lessons. They should be really utilising Indigenous staff in their planning.”**

The critical importance of Aboriginal education support staff in designing and implementing successful school-based Aboriginal culture programs cannot be over stated. **The vast majority of respondents to this research identified Aboriginal education support staff as the most important people in making local Aboriginal culture programs work in their school.**

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Participating Catholic schools in particular reported having made significant investments in Aboriginal Teaching Assistants (ATA) to support Aboriginal cultural programming in their schools, both through employing more ATAs and providing them with training so that they could upskill and gain confidence to communicate within and navigate the schooling system.

Christ the King Catholic School in Lombadina provides a case study in approaches to using structural changes to school leadership as a way to better support and respect the roles of ATAs in implementing cultural programming and cultural competent education practices. Christ the King Catholic school has an ATA coordinator, who functions effectively a deputy Principal with leadership responsibilities for all ATAs. This has provided a clear path for Indigenous leadership in cultural programming, and given structural recognition to the importance of this work.

Halls Creek District High School provides a case study of a State school that has also made significant investments in Aboriginal education staff as part of its commitment to Aboriginal cultural and language education.

## Building Indigenous school leadership

**Supporting Aboriginal education support staff to take on leadership roles in the school is an important success factor identified in this research.** This is one strategy to increase inclusion of Indigenous people in decision making related to cultural education and local Aboriginal cultural programming within schools. Other approaches include creating Aboriginal led culture teams with the school, and supporting Aboriginal led Advisory groups and governing bodies to play explicit and defined roles in school leadership.

One school emphasised the importance of allowing elders to guide the structure, content and delivery of culture programs and to respect their decisions - to see culture and knowledge holders as equally important to mainstream curriculum.

## Strong integration of local Aboriginal culture into whole of curriculum and school

**Many schools that participated in this research articulated the importance of a “whole of school” commitment to engaging with local Aboriginal culture, language and knowledges.**

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The explicit prioritisation of culture within the school by school leadership and all school staff was identified as an important support to school culture programs by multiple participants in this research.

This can include strategies such as:

- promotion of the importance of local Aboriginal culture to the school, through frequent visible statements, signs and symbols supporting local Aboriginal culture, physical signage, naming of buildings and areas of the school in language
- environmental text in local Aboriginal language
- the regular presence of elders in school ceremonies such as assemblies and graduations,
- local cultural practices and language regularly included in activities and excursions
- the use of local Aboriginal language in daily school activities such as greetings, basic instructions, songs and prayers.
- The use of local Aboriginal content (rather than that from other parts of Australia) in curriculum and learning activities.

## Consistency in cultural program delivery

**Schools that give strategic attention and forward planning to implementing strategies to ensure the consistency of cultural program delivery seem to be more successful in maintaining them, even when faced with significant challenges,** such as cultural knowledge holders being unable to regularly participate in classes and activities or change of personnel in the school.

Some strategies to support more consistent delivery of school-based local Aboriginal programs identified by research participants include:

- Planning cultural curriculum and timetables to be able to continue even when specific people may not be available. Purnululu school has developed a colour coded term-based culture timetable which makes visible which activities need elders to be present. They also invest time in creating culturally based activities that can be repeated by non-Indigenous teachers as reinforcement of learning if the scheduled activity for a certain day can't go ahead.
- Cable Beach Primary School collaborates with Nyamba Buru Yawuru to make sure

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that there are relief teachers trained and available for their Yawuru Language Program. Cable Beach Primary, and other schools, use a range of technological tools, such as apps, websites and recordings of language being spoken to help class-room teachers and students to continue with culture and language learning when specific people are not available or school schedules do not synch with community schedules.

- A number of schools identified the importance of strong planning to ensure that the momentum of culture activities is maintained within the school, noting that a lack of consistency can result in less effective learning as well as a general decline in engagement by both students and community members.

## Building cultural competency of non-Indigenous staff

An important success factor identified in this research is the capacity of teachers to work with local Aboriginal cultural contexts and feel comfortable engaging with cultural content.

**“Providing some space for local Aboriginal culture is probably quite challenging, especially when teachers come and they're new. That stuff requires a bit of knowledge of local people and a bit of patience because sometimes things might be not done in a western teaching style. It might seem a little bit chaotic or repetitive.”**

Most schools identified that strong, respectful and collaborative relationships with local communities was critical to build and sustain the cultural competence of non-Indigenous staff. This begins with ensuring there is regular and well delivered cultural induction for new staff, followed by regular opportunities for non-Indigenous staff to interact with, and learn from, local Aboriginal people and grow their understanding of the local cultural context. It is important to note that

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## Structural factors

As part of this research we asked schools to identify structural changes they have made to support local Aboriginal programs and activities in their school. Whilst there were some variations between the sectors responses are summarized as general points below.

### Ensuring there is cultural induction for all new staff in the school

The importance of providing cultural induction for staff new to a specific school and community was repeated by many respondents as helping to support the effectiveness and sustainability of school-based Aboriginal culture programs across Kimberley schools. As discussed in the following section, although several schools participating in this survey report having initiated cultural induction as part of the structural changes to support Aboriginal cultural programming, there is a clear lack of coherence, investment and coordination of cultural induction for school staff across the Kimberley.

### Dedicated resources to support linkage between culture/language activities and curriculum

Several schools have dedicated and formalized methods and resources to support links between culture and language activities and the mainstream class room curriculum – usually through employing a specialist literacy consultant working with culture and language teachers and knowledge holders.

Other schools have created culture program coordinator roles, or culture leadership team with clear roles and responsibilities which include efforts to link activities to class room curriculum.

Several schools highlighted the importance of ensuring clarity around roles and responsibilities of staff in regards to coordinating and implementing cultural programs and activities, and the need to adequately resource people with the appropriate skills and knowledge to collaborate on linking to the curriculum.

### Dedicated budget for local Aboriginal culture program

A number of schools report having restructured their school budget to explicitly resource cultural programming.

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Not only does this provide clarity of financial resources available, it is an explicit commitment from school leadership to valuing and embedding local culture as a core part of school values.

## Dedicated time in both school timetables and in staff roles for culture programming

To deal with the challenges of busy time tables and large workloads several schools have undertaken processes to restructure both class and staff timetables to program in regular time for cultural activities, for cultural program planning and (less commonly) for staff training language and culture.

Participating independent schools reported adopting more tailored approaches to operationalising culture programmes and activities, although several have also created regular time in either daily or weekly programs for language and culture sessions.

One school reported that they had changed their schooling model so that the timetable better fits with community priorities and routines.

**“The shape of the day has been designed with and by Aboriginal people to best suit them”**

## Dedicated physical space in the school for language and culture

At least one participating school has created a dedicated physical space for teaching of language in the school.

Another has previously had a ‘culture room’ but this has had to be repurposed for other uses as the school population grew.

## Partnerships with Aboriginal organisations to delivery specialist programs related to Aboriginal culture

Some schools have created partnerships with other programs which work specifically with Aboriginal students (such as Clontarf Foundation) as a way to support culture into school-based learning. Others have regular partnerships with local Aboriginal organisations, such as ranger groups, to deliver cultural activities and classes in the school.

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# 6

## Gaps and Opportunities

The Kimberley Schools Culture Program Mapping Project provides a unique snapshot of the collaborations between Kimberley schools and local Aboriginal groups and individuals in supporting cultural learning about local Aboriginal cultures and languages within school programs. This research provides us with a valuable picture of what schools are doing in the cultural space of the Kimberley, and a broad scale understanding of the patterns of activities, networks and policy frameworks which they feel support them. Through this mapping we can better understand the gaps and opportunities to strengthen school/culture interfaces in the Kimberley.

This final section of the report summarises the key enabling policy frameworks, gaps and opportunities identified by participants in both the survey and case study research of the Kimberley Schools Aboriginal Cultural Program Mapping Project.

The focus of this section is to clearly identify opportunities to:

- link up the hotspots of innovation in school-based Aboriginal culture teaching and learning around the Kimberley;
- maximise and grow existing efforts to strengthen the school/ culture interface in the Kimberley via improvements in policy and practice;

- 
- better leverage policy initiatives and investments, current and emerging, for higher impact.

This section is divided into 3 parts;

Part One - examines the cultural and curriculum frameworks identified by participants in this research that support Aboriginal cultural teaching and learning in Kimberley schools.

Part Two - reviews emerging policy priorities in Western Australia. This reveals opportunities through which to apply insights gained through this research and strengthen the school/culture interface in the Kimberley.

Part Three - summarises the specific gaps and opportunities for improving school-based local Aboriginal cultural programming in the Kimberley identified through this research.

The report finds that addressing identified gaps and opportunities, offers the most direct means by which to strengthening local Aboriginal culture and practice and improve Kimberley schools' capacities to robustly implement and sustain school-based local Aboriginal culture programs into the future.

## Part One

### Cultural and Curriculum Frameworks supporting local Aboriginal cultural teaching and learning in Kimberley education systems

Participants in this research identified a range of policy, curriculum and cultural frameworks that shape their schools' approach to developing and implementing local Aboriginal cultural content and programming. Schools across the 3 education sectors in the Kimberley share several common frameworks that underpin approaches to school-based Aboriginal culture programming. Participants specifically highlighted the value of the ACARA Australian Curriculum Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority Framework, and the Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Island Languages Framework. The value of Aboriginal teaching and education support workers in enabling culturally appropriate approaches to engaging students and families in schools was also recognised as central to achieving impacts.

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These common frameworks have provided leverage for those schools and educators in the Kimberley that are interested in growing Aboriginal content and programming with a rationale to do so, and provided some guidance as to possible approaches to build such programming in their schools and curriculums. As important as these frameworks are, it is also evident that they have not been accompanied with consistent or sufficient support in the Kimberley region to ensure wide scale and effective implementation across all schools in the region.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority

The ACARA Australian Curriculum, specifically the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority, encourages ATSI histories and cultures to be integrated into all learning areas in the curriculum. The WA Curriculum is largely based on the ACARA Australian curriculum, although some areas have been adapted to the WA context. As articulated by ACARA, the cross-curriculum priority is seeking to address identified needs in Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander education, specifically:

“that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are able to see themselves, their identities and their cultures reflected in the curriculum of each of the learning areas, can fully participate in the curriculum and can build their self-esteem that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority is designed for all students to engage in reconciliation, respect and recognition of the world’s oldest continuous living cultures.” \*

The ATSI Cross-Curriculum priority has provided a mandate and a mechanism for schools across Australia to weave Aboriginal cultural knowledge and history across the curriculum, and significant resources have been developed nationally to aid in this. However, the approach, framing and source of Aboriginal cultural knowledge that individual educators use in the Kimberley depends on their own skills and knowledge, and can be hampered by challenges in accessing and adapting local materials to curriculum needs.

Several research participants expressed concerns that without active investment of time, energy and infrastructure to ensure

\*<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/cross-curriculum-priorities/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-histories-and-cultures/>

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that educators have easy access to resources related to local cultural knowledge and history the cross-curriculum priority does not necessarily contribute to the delivery of learning opportunities about local Aboriginal culture in the Kimberley.

## Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Island Languages Framework<sup>#</sup>

In addition to the cross-curriculum priority areas, the Australian Curriculum identifies Languages as a core learning area, and provides guidance to support schools to implement language programs based on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. The Western Australian Government reported that in 2018, thirteen Aboriginal languages were being taught in public schools in the Kimberley region <sup>\*\*</sup>. As discussed below the WA Department of Education offers a Language teaching traineeship for WA Department of Education employees who are speakers of an Indigenous language, and over time this has significantly contributed to the capacity of several Kimberley schools to deliver language

based-Aboriginal culture programs (see Case Studies for examples).

## Aboriginal teaching support staff

A third structural framework which provides critical support to the teaching and learning of Aboriginal culture in Kimberley schools is the employment of Aboriginal teaching support staff. All schools with significant proportions of Aboriginal students in the Kimberley have capacity to employ Aboriginal teaching and education support works (although these are funded and named differently in the different sectors). This research has found that school-based Aboriginal cultural programs in Kimberley rely heavily on Aboriginal education support staff to plan and implement and resource school-based Aboriginal cultural programming.

The few schools in the Kimberley with a low percentage of Aboriginal students report that lack of dedicated Aboriginal education support staff as a significant barrier to implementing school-based Aboriginal culture programs.

<sup>#</sup><https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/languages/framework-for-aboriginal-languages-and-torres-strait-islander-languages/what-is-the-framework/>

<sup>\*\*</sup><https://www.dpc.wa.gov.au/ProjectsandSpecialEvents/Pages/Aboriginal-youth-wellbeing.aspx>

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Whilst this research has found that these positions are critical to the feasibility and success of school-based local Aboriginal culture programs in the Kimberley, the support, resourcing and training provided to Aboriginal teaching and education support staff could be greatly strengthened. Several research participants identified the absence of curriculum development and mapping skills in training programs for Aboriginal teaching support staff in programs in the Kimberley and more broadly in WA, as well as the need to build better collaborative skills between classroom teachers and Aboriginal education support staff .

## Three Critical Elements

The ATSI History and Cultures Cross Curriculum Priority, the Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Island Languages Framework and the presence of Aboriginal teaching support staff represent three critical enablers of school-based Aboriginal cultural programs and activities in the Kimberley. The frameworks provide a critical mechanism for schools interested in implementing school-based Aboriginal cultural programs to justify and partially resource such programs. However, as is discussed throughout this report, there is a need for significant resourcing to enable

the full potential of the opportunities provided by these frameworks to be effectively implemented and sustained in the Kimberley supported by Aboriginal teaching support staff. Without proper resourcing, good Frameworks and policy will not achieve the desired outcomes.

## Differences in enabling policies and frameworks between education sectors in the Kimberley

While there are commonalities between the three education sectors in the Kimberley they also each have notably different frameworks, priorities and approaches which impact on school-based Aboriginal culture programming. The discussion below points to some differences identified by participants in this research.

### State / public sector

#### Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework

State schools in Western Australia are guided by Western Australian Department of Education Aboriginal Cultural

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Standards Framework (2015)\*. This framework aims to support schools and teachers to be more culturally responsive and provides standards across themes of Relationships, Leadership, Teaching, Learning Environment and Resources. It provides indicators and benchmarks against which schools and educators can self-assess along a continuum from cultural awareness to cultural responsiveness. Several schools participating in this research identified the Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework as a valuable tool in assessing their progress in implementing local Aboriginal programs in their school.

## Aboriginal Language Teacher Training

The WA government funds an in-school and block release traineeship program for Aboriginal Language teachers, providing funded training for speakers of an Aboriginal language employed by the WA Department of Education #. This research found that most of the Kimberley schools with a strong and functioning Aboriginal Language program had staff who were currently training in this program or had previously completed it. Several

independent schools also employed staff who were participating in this program.

## Kimberley based coordination of Aboriginal Education

Several participating State schools indicated the level of regional support for schools to be culturally responsive has been diminished in recent years by the closure of the Kimberley Aboriginal Education Unit. As a result, there is no central coordination point for State schools to broker relationships, provide training or build relationships with Aboriginal organisations and communities seeking to engage with the public education system. This means that Aboriginal groups and organisations seeking to partner with schools in the state system must work with individual schools and their leadership rather than access a central coordination unit focused on Aboriginal education or supporting schools to achieve Aboriginal cultural standards. Several participants in this research noted the lack of WA Department of Education coordination of Aboriginal education and engagement within the Kimberley region as impacting

<http://det.wa.edu.au/aboriginaleducation/detcms/navigation/aboriginal-education/#http://det.wa.edu.au/curriculumsupport/detcms/school-support-programs/curriculum-support/news-items/expressions-of-interest-for-2017-aboriginal-languages-teacher-training.en>

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on the capacity of schools and local cultural knowledge holders to coordinate their work related to school-based Aboriginal cultural programs.

## Catholic Schools

### Cultural Competency Matrix

Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) uses a cultural competency matrix which includes a range of tools to assess on a continuum from cultural awareness to cultural competency. Tools are provided to support assessment of school and individual cultural competency through audits and checklists for both schools and individual teachers. In the Kimberley the use of these tools is supported by a dedicated Aboriginal Education Consultant, employed in the Broome office of CEWA. This consultant visits schools and helps to prepare school level annual cultural action plans to support movement towards cultural competency.

### Growing Enriched Cultural Knowledge in Our Schools program

The Catholic education system also has a in a program called Growing Enriched

Cultural Knowledge in Our Schools (GECKOS) that provides schools with support to assist Aboriginal people to visit and run activities in their school. The CEWA Aboriginal education team maintains a contact list of Aboriginal people with specific cultural skills (such as dancing or artefact making) to assist schools in arranging Aboriginal cultural activities in their area.

Some respondents from the Catholic sector identified the focus on spiritual values in their education model as a useful means through which to foreground local Aboriginal culture in school-based activities.

Several research respondents from the Catholic education sector in the Kimberley commented on the challenge of providing training and networking opportunities for Aboriginal cultural knowledge holders working in the school.

## Independent Schools

Independent schools in the Kimberley generally have a higher capacity for flexible design of how they deliver the curriculum. They have usually been founded in close collaboration with a specific cultural group and community. Independent schools are governed by boards and these tend to

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include local Aboriginal people. Principals are appointed in the Independent school sector by the school board, usually giving them a direct line of accountability to people from the local community.

Kimberley independent schools are often located on traditional Country for many of their students, or very close to it. They are usually located on land which has clearly recognised Traditional Owners making the work of identifying appropriate language and cultural knowledge holders with whom to collaborate a little easier.

This research found that independent schools were more used to having to seek out grant funding to support cultural programming than schools in the other sectors. Despite this, several schools reported that accessing grant funds to support Aboriginal cultural programs was very challenging, with funders not wanting to fund activities that were perceived to be the responsibility of government. They also had somewhat more flexibility in how core school funds could be allocated, allowing them to respond to changed circumstances more rapidly than schools in the other sectors, and employ educational consultants directly.

Several independent schools, however, noted that support previously provided by

the Kimberley Independent Schools Support Unit to connect schools across the region and provide regional cultural orientation was no longer available.

## Educational policies and pedagogical programs

As noted in the introduction to this report, the Kimberley has a long history of seeing an ebb and flow of school-based Aboriginal culture and language projects and programs in line with the ebb and flow of pedagogical philosophies, educational, cultural and regional policies. The recent context of the Kimberley has included some pedagogical programs which research participants highlighted as having an impact on the capacity of schools to implement school-based Aboriginal culture programs.

## Direct or Explicit Instruction models

In recent years a significant number of Kimberley schools have taken part in programs to implement Direct or Explicit Instruction modes of teaching, supported first through the Good to Great Schools

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Australia programs\*, and more recently through the Kimberley Schools Program#.

Several schools reported that the increased burden of administration and staff training required for direct or explicit instruction models, coupled with the standardization in curriculum content and form of delivery, were proving to be incompatible with developing and sustaining school-based programs centred on local Aboriginal culture.

Most comments related to a lack of time and resources for staff to build capacity in direct instruction whilst also meeting the needs for flexibility and adaptability in developing and sustaining relationships and materials for a regularly delivered local Aboriginal culture program. Other comments from research participants highlighted the pedagogical differences between a practical “looking and doing” mode of learning around which most Aboriginal cultural teaching and learning occurs and the direct instruction approach.

## Part Two

### Emerging policy opportunities to strengthen the school/culture interface in the Kimberley

Although sadly driven by tragedy and crisis within Kimberley Aboriginal communities, there are shifts afoot within Western Australia that provide significant opportunities for change. These new initiatives aim to build upon the learning from several decades of effort by Aboriginal people and Kimberley schools to strengthen the interface between Aboriginal cultural knowledge and identity and formal school systems in the Kimberley.

### Statement of Intent on Aboriginal Youth Suicide May 2019

Of particular note is the WA Governments Statement of Intent on Aboriginal Youth Suicide, which makes explicit recognition of “the essential role of cultural identity

\*<https://goodtoregreeschools.org.au/>

#<https://regionalservicesreform.wa.gov.au/pr/kimberley-schools-project>

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and resilience in tackling the impacts of intergenerational trauma, and the importance of promoting reconciliation and understanding in the Western Australian community.” (pg 3) This statement of intent recognizes the important role of partnerships between local Aboriginal communities and service providers (such as schools), clearly articulates the intent to build upon successful initiatives that have been developed at local levels and provide culturally based programs.

School-based local Aboriginal culture programs, such as those profiled in case studies in this report, are examples of such successful, locally developed partnerships between local communities and schools to provide culturally based programming for young people across the Kimberley region.

The WA Government Statement of Intent on Aboriginal Youth Suicide articulates intent to identify;

“ways in which the Government can enhance Aboriginal wellbeing by improving, reforming, or implementing new ways of supporting the Aboriginal community,” including approaches which better understand, “what matters to Aboriginal people, factoring in regional and cultural differences” (pg 7).

As shown in the case studies and other data provided in this report, successful school-based local Aboriginal culture programs in the Kimberley are strongly aligned with and guided by the values of local Aboriginal people, and allow for regional cultural difference in their content and approach.

It is notable, that whilst the WA Government Statement of Intent on Aboriginal Youth Suicide articulates intent to commit to improved services and programs, it also highlights programs such as the Kimberley Schools Project as an example of such program improvement.

This research found, as discussed above, that there can be a tension between regional government programs, such as the Kimberley Schools Project and its focus on models of direct instruction in Kimberley schools, and the stated WA government goal of ensuring that service provision allows regional and cultural differences to be factored in to service and program implementation. Case studies in this research demonstrate the necessity of flexibility in local adaptation of standardised approaches to curriculum and pedagogy when implementing school-based local Aboriginal culture programs in the Kimberley.

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The WA Government Statement of Intent on Aboriginal Youth Suicide also articulates an intent to improve government coordination, leadership and accountability (pg 10). As discussed below regional and cross-sectoral coordination of activities, resourcing and capacity building at the interface between schools and Aboriginal culture in the Kimberley is deeply lacking. The intention of the WA government to take a lead in coordination efforts, underpinned by recognition of the importance of culturally based programs marks a critical opportunity to strengthen cross-sectoral and regional coordination in support of school-based local Aboriginal programs and the people who implement and sustain them in the Kimberley.

## Development of a Western Australian Cultural Policy & Aboriginal Affairs Strategy

WA Government Statement of Intent on Aboriginal Youth Suicide May 2019 accepts Recommendation 42 of the Inquest into the 13 Deaths of Children and Young Persons in the Kimberley Region (2019). This includes the recommendation that the WA Government develop a state-wide Aboriginal cultural policy that recognises the importance of cultural continuity and cultural security to the

wellbeing of Aboriginal people.

The WA Government has stated its intention to create an Aboriginal Cultural Policy and to release a draft Aboriginal Affairs Strategy before the end of 2019 (pg 32 of the WA Government Statement of Intent on Aboriginal Youth Suicide May 2019).

The development of a WA Aboriginal Cultural Policy provides a critical opportunity to engage both Aboriginal people and the school sectors that operate in Western Australia. It is envisaged that the development of meaningful policy frameworks and strategic support in implementing these will further strengthen the interface school/culture interface in the Kimberley. This will of course require supported and sustained implementation of collaborations between local Aboriginal people, in particular Aboriginal cultural knowledge holders, schools and education sectors in the Kimberley.

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## Part Three

# Gaps and Opportunities to strengthen the school/culture interface in the Kimberley

This final section outlines the gaps and opportunities identified through the Kimberley Schools Culture Program Mapping Project to strengthen and sustain school-based local Aboriginal culture programs in the Kimberley region of Western Australia.

These include the need for:

- Networking and peer support opportunities for staff implementing school-based local Aboriginal culture and language programs across the Kimberley region
- Cultural Orientation for new school staff run from a cultural point of view
- Training and Professional Development opportunities for Kimberley people in teaching culture and language
- Archiving and access to culture and language teaching resources

- Building networks between groups and organisations developing cultural knowledge with young people

Networking and peer support opportunities for staff implementing culture and language programs

### *Gaps*

There is a significant gap in initiatives to create and sustain networks of people implementing and supporting Aboriginal cultural programs education across the region. From this and previous research on school culture programs in the Kimberley it is clear there are innovative and effective practices of implementing school-based local Aboriginal culture and language programs across all sectors. However, they are not connected or connecting with each other, nor sharing practice and resources, even within local networks. Even within regional where the same language is being taught in different schools there is very little evidence of sharing of knowledge, good practice, materials or resources.

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## ***Opportunities***

There is a significant and growing pool of Kimberley graduates from the WA Department of Education Aboriginal language Teacher Traineeship Program. This research found that these trained Aboriginal language teachers play a significant role in the strengthening and expansion of Aboriginal Language programs across the region. This group, plus the range of staff involved in other aspects of teaching and learning of Aboriginal culture in schools, form a significant local workforce oriented towards supporting cultural education in schools.

There is an opportunity to add great value to the training investments already made in Aboriginal language teachers and the establishment of language and culture programs by schools, by funding regular regional networking opportunities between cultural knowledge holders, Aboriginal educators, teachers and school leaders involved in implementing culture and language programs in schools across the Kimberley.

This would work best if it provided cross-sectoral opportunities for teaching staff and cultural knowledge holders working in the 3 school sectors to share practice, resources and build networks.

Targeted opportunities for networking for Principals, Aboriginal education support workers and teachers working on school-based Aboriginal culture programs would also foster sharing of good practice and skill development of these three important cohorts.

The Kimberley Independent Schools Support Unit (no longer active) was mentioned by several research participants as having previously supported regional gatherings in the West Kimberley, Fitzroy Valley and East Kimberley that were very valuable for supporting networking across schools and ensuring some form of cultural induction was provided to new staff. This approach could be adopted on a larger scale to support cross-sectoral regional sharing

## **Strengthening Indigenous leadership in Kimberley schools**

### ***Gaps***

Having Aboriginal people working in schools across the Kimberley is critical to the success of education of Aboriginal students in general, and to successfully developing and implementing school-based local Aboriginal programs and activities. However, this research

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found that there are inconsistencies in how Aboriginal people are formally included as part of the leadership structures in Kimberley schools and in leading approaches to culturally based activities and its links to classroom curriculum. Many participants in this research highlighted the importance of valuing and empowering local Aboriginal staff to take the lead in planning and implementing local Aboriginal curriculum and activities, but also noted that hierarchies of unequal power remain between Aboriginal education support staff and classroom teachers. These perceived power dynamics, in which classroom teachers have more authority than local Aboriginal staff, can prevent strong leadership by local Aboriginal people in ensuring effective and sustained culturally based teaching and learning in Kimberley schools.

### ***Opportunities***

There is a significant opportunity to strengthen local Indigenous leadership within Kimberley schools. Specific approaches include:

1. Formalizing structures of Aboriginal cultural governance in Kimberley schools through active inclusion of local Aboriginal

people on school boards, and the formation, maintenance and participation of Aboriginal advisory groups.

2. Actively developing Aboriginal leadership within individual schools. Some schools have created Aboriginal teaching assistant leadership positions on par with Deputy Principal to ensure strong Aboriginal leadership of cultural programming (see Christ the King Catholic School case study).

3. Supporting the critical role Aboriginal teaching and education support staff can play in guiding approaches to culturally based curriculum development and teaching and learning approaches. In particular there is an opportunity to build capacity of local Aboriginal education and teaching support staff to play more active roles in linking local cultural activities and knowledge to class room curriculum

4. Build the skills of classroom teachers and Aboriginal education and teaching support staff to collaborate better in planning and implementation of culturally based curriculum and activities.

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## Cultural Orientation for new school staff-run from a cultural point of view

### *Gaps*

This and previous research demonstrate that a coordinated suite of cultural inductions for non-local staff are an essential component of a strong school-based program teaching local Aboriginal culture and language. It is critical that local cultural induction opportunities be provided to all new school staff coming to work in Kimberley communities, to grow their knowledge and confidence in engaging with the cultural context in which they are working and their students are living.

### *Opportunity*

Cultural inductions are already run by many schools in the Kimberley, but their quality, focus and regularity vary greatly. There is a need to strengthen the quality and frequency of cultural inductions being offered to new staff in Kimberley schools.

This could include:

- All school sectors operating in the Kimberley to create guidelines and incentives (funding and support) to school

leadership to ensure cultural induction processes take place on a regular and prioritised basis.

- Developing specific regional cultural induction processes for all incoming school Principals.
- Development of good-practice guide to cultural induction targeted at Kimberley schools – this would not provide specific cultural content, but would be a tool to support Principals and Aboriginal Education support staff usually tasked with putting together cultural induction, with suggested themes, processes, tools and possibly a checklist for putting together locally relevant cultural induction processes.
- Encouraging schools to formalize cultural mentoring opportunities through matching non-local staff with a local staff or community member to build relationships and provide opportunities for ongoing learning about the local cultural and community context.

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## Training and Professional Development for Kimberley people in teaching culture and language

### ***Gaps***

A range of significant gaps in opportunities for Kimberley-based people to access training in effective strategies for teaching and learning local Aboriginal cultural content were identified through this research.

Many participants in this research identified the lack of opportunities for Aboriginal adults to learn to be strong speakers of local languages. Many also identified the lack of training and support for cultural knowledge holders to learn how to teach about this knowledge, particularly in structured teaching and learning environments such as schools or classrooms.

### ***Opportunities***

There are 3 important cohorts who are in need of training and support in order to grow and strengthen school-based local Aboriginal culture programs in the Kimberley. Principals, teachers and Aboriginal education support staff all

identified distinct gaps in skills and knowledge of effective approaches.

## Local Aboriginal people who play a role in teaching language and culture knowledge

### ***Gaps***

There is a significant gap in Kimberley based training opportunities in effective methods of teaching of cultural knowledge in structured environments, especially but not limited to language. Several Kimberley language centres are providing this training to people within specific language groups. As mentioned above there is a growing cohort of Aboriginal language teachers who have been trained through the WA Department of Education Aboriginal Language Teacher traineeship program, but this involves block release travel to Perth regularly over 2 years.

There is a gap in professional development opportunities for Aboriginal education support staff more broadly, and training for Aboriginal cultural knowledge holders who are or are interested in collaborating with local schools on cultural programs.

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## ***Opportunities***

Training and mentoring for this cohort in methods of structuring and delivering curriculum and lessons of culturally based content, developing and sharing culturally based teaching resources, and in strategies to effectively collaborate with non-Indigenous teachers and school leaders in cultural programming would significantly strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of school-based Aboriginal programs in the Kimberley.

## **The Role of Principals**

### ***Gaps***

This research has shown the central role that school Principals play in establishing, and supporting school-based Aboriginal cultural programming in specific schools. However, it is evident from this research that Principals with a commitment to Aboriginal culture programs and activities are each having to ‘reinvent the wheel’ in each school.

### ***Opportunities***

Opportunities for training and networking about good-practice in local Aboriginal programming for Principals would greatly strengthen existing programs and provide

much needed peer support to establish or revive programs in other schools.

Principals networking across school sectors would strengthen regional efforts at supporting cultural safety in Kimberley schools and provide opportunities for cross-sectoral learning and resource sharing about good practice.

## **The role of school teaching staff**

### ***Gaps***

This research has found that the capacity of classroom teaching staff to work closely with Aboriginal education support staff and local Aboriginal cultural knowledge holders is a critical factor in their ability to weave local Aboriginal cultural knowledge across the curriculum, as suggested by the ACARA cross curriculum priorities. This important factor is currently under resourced and lacking coordination.

### ***Opportunities***

Training and professional development opportunities for Kimberley based teaching staff to strengthen their knowledge of local Aboriginal culture and history is essential. Understanding how to find relevant resources, and strategies to link local orally based and site-specific

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knowledge into classroom-based activities would significantly enhance the effectiveness and sustainability. Current efforts at school-based Aboriginal cultural teaching and learning require resourcing to fill gaps in capacity created by high turnover of classroom teaching staff across Kimberley schools.

## Archiving and access to culture and language teaching resources

### *Gaps*

There is a rich history of schools, language centres and cultural groups creating cultural and language resources for use in cultural teaching in the Kimberley, however there has been no coordination for sharing of this material between groups and organisations, nor systemic approaches to archiving of this material locally or regionally. The lack of archiving and sharing, even within one school or language group, has significant negative impacts on the efficiency and effectiveness of school-based Aboriginal cultural teaching and learning in the Kimberley. A lot of energy and time is wasted by reinventing cultural and language teaching materials or individual people or programs having to search for previous materials.

### *Opportunities*

This research observed a shift towards such cultural materials being created and held by PBCs, Indigenous ranger groups and other cultural organisations, and then shared with schools for use in their cultural programming. This seems to be a more effective and culturally led model, which addresses potential intellectual property issues arising from creation of culturally based teaching and learning resources. Some PBCs, schools and cultural organisations in the Kimberley are creating archives, databases and websites to store and share within cultural groups or more broadly. However, much is still at risk of being lost as paper-based materials become forgotten in boxes and back rooms around the Kimberley, and digital repositories, such as web sites and databases, remain precarious without coordinated back up, updates to operating platforms and cataloguing.

There is an urgent need to create a regional approach to archiving, cataloging, and where appropriate sharing and access, of these important resources. There is undoubtedly a role for regional and national cultural organisations to play a role in this coordination and back up efforts. Without urgent attention to the gap in archiving and sharing there is a very

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high risk that resources and materials will become inaccessible within just a few years, and perhaps more critically valuable resources will be wasted by schools and cultural knowledge holders across the Kimberley as materials have to be made and remade with each generation of school-based cultural programming.

## Building networks between groups and organisations developing cultural knowledge with young people

### *Gaps*

Many participants in this research identified a range of Aboriginal cultural organisations that play a role in implementing school-based local Aboriginal cultural programs. Indigenous Rangers Groups, for example, were identified by several schools as providing valuable support for on Country excursions for school students. However, the links between schools and Aboriginal organisations working on developing cultural knowledge with young people in the Kimberley are generally weak and reliant on personal connections. There are significant gaps in awareness about what groups, schools and organisations are doing in cultural teaching and learning spaces. In part this is because few schools

have clear roles for coordination of school-based Aboriginal cultural programming and other organisations may not have an express priority of engaging with schools, despite the common agendas and goals. There is often little regular connection between organisations working in different sectors (ie caring for country, education, health, arts and culture), and non-Indigenous school staff may be unaware of the broader cultural and organizational networks operating across the region.

### *Opportunities*

Models such as the CEWA GECKOS list, which maintains a register of Aboriginal people and organisations that Kimberley Catholic schools can approach to deliver cultural activities, could be used to develop regional contact lists of organisations and groups working on cultural teaching and learning for young people in the Kimberley to aid schools in building links and to build coalitions for shared initiatives targeting school aged children.

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# Appendices

Appendix 1 - Kimberley Schools Aboriginal Culture  
Program Mapping Survey Tool

Appendix 2 - Case study invitation letter

Appendix 3 - Letter of support for research from KALACC



Kimberley Schools Aboriginal Culture Program Mapping Survey (v.S)

Welcome to the Kimberley Schools Aboriginal Culture Program Mapping Survey

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey. Your contribution to this survey is highly valued and will form a key part of a research project to better understand the work that schools and local Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley are doing to support Aboriginal cultural knowledge for students through school-based cultural activities and programs.

You can leave any questions you do not wish to answer blank and still complete the survey. This survey should take about 20 minutes to complete.

This research is being undertaken by Dr Maya Haviland, from the College of Arts and Social Sciences at the Australian National University and is supported by the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre (KALACC). Information gathered in this survey may inform the work of KALACC and its Kimberley Caring for Culture Plan, which aims to guide future work in supporting Aboriginal culture in the Kimberley. This research is approved by the ANU Human Research Ethics committee protocol #2018/169. For questions or issues related to this survey please contact [maya.haviland@anu.edu.au](mailto:maya.haviland@anu.edu.au)

Please note that information you provide on this survey may be transferred to a Survey Monkey server in the USA where it is not protected by Australian privacy legislation. The survey is designed not to identify you or the school you work within the data held on Survey Monkey servers. By completing this survey, you agree to this transfer and data storage.

## About your school

**1. Please enter the unique identifier code provided in the email or letter inviting you to participate in this research.**

*(Results from this survey will not identify schools by name but information provided may be used to select case studies for further research. By entering the code provided researchers can link your responses with a specific school but this information is not held on any external servers)*

**2. What is your position in the school?**

*(Please note this information is only gathered to identify the statistics of who is answering the survey and results will not identify individuals or their position)*

**3. Have you worked in any other schools in the Kimberley?**

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes (please include how many schools you have worked with)

**4. How many years in total have you worked in schools in the Kimberely?**

**5. How many Aboriginal staff are currently employed in the school?**

6. What percentage of students would you estimate are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

7. Do you know the local Aboriginal Traditional Owner groups for the location of the school?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes (please provide the name of the group(s))

8. What Aboriginal languages are spoken in the community where your school is located?

9. Are there LOTE (Languages other than English) or similar programs currently operating in your school?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes

Please name languages taught and other details you think are relevant

10. Is there an Aboriginal advisory, reference group, or governing body in your school?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes (please describe its make up and functions)

**11. Do you have an Aboriginal Teachers Aids or Aboriginal Education Officers or similar in your school?**

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes (please briefly describe their role and any work they do related to school culture programs or activities)

**12. Do you have an Aboriginal Programs Coordinator or similar in your school?**

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes (please briefly describe their role)

**13. Are there any other important Aboriginal persons or groups involved with your school?**

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes (please list these and briefly describe their relationship with the school)

**14. Is your school currently involved in running any school-based Aboriginal cultural programs?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

### Previous involvement in school-based Aboriginal cultural programs or activities

**15. Has your school ever been involved in school-based Aboriginal cultural programs or activities?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

## Kimberley Schools Aboriginal Culture Program Mapping Survey (v.S)

### Past school-based Aboriginal Culture Programs in your school

**16. What do you think were the major reasons your school stopped running Aboriginal culture programs?**

**17. Please describe the kinds of school-based Aboriginal cultural activities or programs that were run in your school.**

**18. How frequently were Aboriginal cultural activities or programs run in your school?**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Everyday           | <input type="radio"/> Once a fortnight                                 |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 - 3 times a week | <input type="radio"/> Once a month                                     |
| <input type="radio"/> Once a week        | <input type="radio"/> Only on specially themed days (i.e. NAIDOC week) |

Please provide any additional information you think is relevant

**19. On average, how many hours did each program or activity run for?**

**20. Who was involved in running these activities?**

- ☐ Class room teaching staff
- ☐ School administrative staff
- ☐ Aboriginal teachers aids
- ☐ Parents
- ☐ Local Aboriginal rangers
- ☐ Other (please specify)
- ☐ Elders from local traditional owner groups
- ☐ Local Businesses
- ☐ Specialist teaching staff (ie special needs or literacy teachers)
- ☐ Other community members

**21. Please describe how cultural activities were integrated into, or related to, the broader school curriculum?**

**22. Was there a dedicated staff member or members who had responsibility for programming and coordinating school culture activities?**

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes  
(please describe their job title and role in coordinating activities - if known please also estimate how much time they spend coordinating Aboriginal cultural activities and programs)

**23. Was there a person responsible for linking Aboriginal cultural activities to the broader curriculum?**

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes (please describe their job title and role)

**24. Did all students in the school participate in school-based Aboriginal cultural programs?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ No

Please provide any additional information you think is relevant (if you answered NO please estimate what percentage of students participate in programs)

**25. Could students’ families participate in school based Aboriginal cultural activities in your school?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ No

Please provide any additional information you think is relevant

**26. Were community members (other than student’s family members) able to participate or attend school based Aboriginal cultural activities in your school?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ No

Please provide any additional information you think is relevant

**27. Did your school have school based Aboriginal cultural programs or activities designed for specific student or year groups?**

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes (please briefly describe these targeted programs and their rationales for working with specific student groups)

**28. Did all school-based Aboriginal culture activities occur on the school premises?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (please briefly describe where other activities take place)

**29. Did all activities occur during normal school hours?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (please briefly describe when else they occur)

**30. Was there a dedicated budget for running Aboriginal cultural activities in your school?**

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes  
(if known please include how much this budget is and who provides the funding)

**27. Did your school have school based Aboriginal cultural programs or activities designed for specific student or year groups?**

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes (please briefly describe these targeted programs and their rationales for working with specific student groups)

**28. Did all school-based Aboriginal culture activities occur on the school premises?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (please briefly describe where other activities take place)

**29. Did all activities occur during normal school hours?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (please briefly describe when else they occur)

**30. Was there a dedicated budget for running Aboriginal cultural activities in your school?**

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes  
(if known please include how much this budget is and who provides the funding)

### Attempts to establish school based cultural activities

**31. Have you been involved in attempts to establish any school-based cultural programs?**

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes (please tell us about these attempts and why you think they failed)

### School-based Aboriginal Culture Programs in your school

**32. Please describe the kinds of school-based Aboriginal cultural activities or programs currently run in your school.**

**33. How frequently are Aboriginal cultural activities or programs run in your school?**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Everyday           | <input type="radio"/> Once a fortnight                                 |
| <input type="radio"/> 2 - 3 times a week | <input type="radio"/> Once a month                                     |
| <input type="radio"/> Once a week        | <input type="radio"/> Only on specially themed days (i.e. NAIDOC week) |

Please provide any additional information you think is relevant

**34. On average, how many hours does each program or activity run for?**

35. Who is involved in running these activities?

- ☐ Class room teaching staff
- ☐ School administration staff
- ☐ Aboriginal teachers aids
- ☐ Parents
- ☐ Local Aboriginal rangers
- ☐ Other (please specify)
- ☐ Elders from local traditional owner groups
- ☐ Local Businesses
- ☐ Specialist teaching staff (ie special needs or literacy teachers)
- ☐ Other community members

36. Please describe how cultural activities are integrated into, or related to, the broader school curriculum?

37. Is there a dedicated staff member or members who have responsibility for programming and coordinating school culture activities?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes  
(please describe their job title and role in coordinating activities - if known please also estimate how much time they spend coordinating Aboriginal cultural activities and programs)

38. Is there a person responsible for linking Aboriginal cultural activities to the broader curriculum?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes (please describe their job title and role)

**39. Do all students in the school participate in school-based Aboriginal cultural programs?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ No

Please provide any additional information you think is relevant (if you answered NO please estimate what percentage of students participate in programs)

**40. Can students’ families participate in school based Aboriginal cultural activities in your school?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ No

Please provide any additional information you think is relevant

**41. Are community members (other than student’s family members) able to participate or attend school based Aboriginal cultural activities in your school?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ No

Please provide any additional information you think is relevant

**42. Does your school have school based Aboriginal cultural programs or activities designed for specific student or year groups?**

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes (please briefly describe these targeted programs and their rationales for working with specific student groups)

**43. Do all school-based Aboriginal culture activities occur on the school premises?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (please briefly describe where other activities take place)

**44. Do all activities occur during normal school hours?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (please briefly describe when else they occur)

**45. Is there a dedicated budget for running Aboriginal cultural activities in your school?**

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes  
(if known please include how much this budget is and who provides the funding)

**46. In the past, has your school run Aboriginal cultural programs or activities that are no longer active?**

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes (please briefly describe past programs or activities, and reasons they were discontinued if known)

## Success factors in School-based Aboriginal Culture Programs

47. What challenges have you or your staff faced in establishing or sustaining collaborations with local Aboriginal community members to implement school based Aboriginal culture programs or activities?

48. How have the structures, staffing and/or processes in the school changed in order to operationalise school-based Aboriginal cultural activities or programs?

49. In your opinion, what factors make school-based cultural activities most successful?

50. What are the main challenges you or your staff face in undertaking and sustaining Aboriginal cultural activities in the school?

**51. What benefits do you see resulting from the Aboriginal school-based cultural programs or activities (either in your school or other schools you know about)?**

**52. Who do you think benefits from school-based cultural programs?**

**53. Do you know of other school based Aboriginal culture programs or activities that you think are effective?**

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes  
(please name the school(s) and briefly describe the program(s) and what you think is good about them)

**54. Would you be willing for staff at your school to participate in a phone or face to face interview about Aboriginal cultural activities in the school as part of a Case Study?**

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes  
(who would be the best people to discuss the program with? Please provide their name and the best method to contact them)

**55. Is there any other information or comments you would like to add about school based Aboriginal cultural programs in the Kimberley?**

### Thanks and Survey Results

Thank you for completing this survey. Your contributions are greatly appreciated.

Results from this survey will be provided to the Principals of all participating schools, as well as to the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre, Catholic Education WA & WA Department of Education. For further information about the research or to access results please contact Dr. Maya Haviland on email at [maya.haviland@anu.edu.au](mailto:maya.haviland@anu.edu.au)



DD MM YYYY

**Maya Haviland**  
Lecturer, Museum Anthropology  
**Centre for Heritage and Museum Studies**  
**School of Archaeology and Anthropology**  
Sir Roland Wilson Building, 120

**+61 2 6125 9147 #0418 366 699**  
Maya.Haviland@anu.edu.au

Canberra ACT 0200 Australia  
**www.anu.edu.au**

CRICOS Provider No. 00120C

Dear *[Insert Title and Surname of Site Manager]*

**Re: Kimberley Schools Culture Program Mapping Project**

Thank you for your schools recent participation in the Kimberley Schools Culture Program Mapping survey, your involvement is greatly appreciated. I would like to invite your school to be one of six selected to be case studies in the research. Your school has been selected as a possible best practice case study based on results from the Kimberley Schools Culture Program Mapping survey and consultations undertaken by the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre (KALACC) and the researchers with community members and local Aboriginal organisations.

Case studies will be undertaken by myself, Dr Maya Haviland, and will primarily involve my visiting your school for 1 day to conduct interviews with 3 – 5 staff involved in cultural programs or activities. Participants in the case study could include teaching and non-teaching staff involved in implementation of any school-based cultural education programs or activities run at your school. Participants would be asked to participate in an interview of between 30-60 minutes in duration. Where feasible I would also seek access to review publically available documentation of previous school-based cultural education activities and relevant curriculum materials.

The permission of participants will be sought individually and participants will be de-identified in the research. As the school principal you will be given a copy of the case study before final publication for review to insure the privacy of staff and students is maintained.

If you are willing to participate further in the research I am available to visit your school on these dates *[insert dates]*. Please contact me if these dates are not convenient or if you have any questions about my visit.

I will keep the *[insert type of Department site, e.g. school, college]*'s involvement in the administration of the research procedures to a minimum. However, it will be necessary for the *[insert type of Department site, e.g. school, college]* to inform staff and volunteers that they may be contacted to participate in the research and that a site visit by researchers will be occurring on an agreed date.

**To what extent is participation voluntary, and what are the implications of withdrawing that participation?**

Participation in the project is entirely **voluntary** and participants may, without negative consequences, decline to take part or withdraw from the research without providing an explanation at any time until the work is prepared for publication. If participants do withdraw from the research before the final report is prepared, then all contributions will be destroyed and not used.

There will be no consequences relating to any decision by an individual or the *[insert type of Department site, e.g. school, college]* regarding participation, other than those already described in this letter. Decisions made will not affect the relationship with the research team or the Australian National University

**What will happen to the information collected, and is privacy and confidentiality assured?**

Only researchers involved in this project will have access to the interviews gathered in this research. Individual participants will be de-identified in all aspects of the research and final publications. Please note that confidentiality can only be protected as far as the law allows.

In collecting personal information within this research, the ANU must comply with the Privacy Act 1988. The ANU Privacy Policy is available at [https://policies.anu.edu.au/ppl/document/ANUP\\_010007](https://policies.anu.edu.au/ppl/document/ANUP_010007) and it contains information about how a person can:

- Access or seek correction to their personal information;
- Complain about a breach of an Australian Privacy Principle by ANU, and how ANU will handle the complaint.

All data collected in this project will be stored on a secure, password protected harddrive in a locked filing cabinet in the office of Dr. Maya Haviland at the Australian National University. Data will be kept for a minimum of 5 years after publication, and after that period of time it will be retained in a de-identified format for use by Dr. Maya Haviland in future research.

Consistent with Department of Education policy, a summary of the research findings will be made available to the participating site(s) and the Department. You can expect this to be available *November 2018*.

#### **Is this research approved?**

The research has been approved by the Australian National University Human Research Ethics Committee (Protocol 2018/169), and has met the policy requirements of the Department of Education as indicated in the attached letter.

#### **Do all members of the research team who will be having contact with children have their Working with Children Check?**

Yes. Under the Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004, people undertaking work in Western Australia that involves contact with children must undergo a Working with Children Check. Although this research will not involve direct engagement with children in the research, as parts of the research involve site visits to school the research leader, Dr. Maya Haviland, has a Working with Children Check valid for Western Australia.

#### **Who do I contact if I wish to discuss the project further?**

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this study with a member of the research team, or have any questions you would like answered, please contact me on the number provided below.

If you wish to speak with an independent person about the conduct of the project, please contact:

Ethics Manager

The ANU Human Research Ethics Committee

The Australian National University

Telephone: +61 2 6125 3427

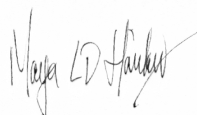
Email: [Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au](mailto:Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au).

#### **How do I indicate my willingness for the *[insert type of Department site, e.g. school, college]* to be involved?**

If you have had all questions about the project answered to your satisfaction, and are willing for the *[insert type of Department site, e.g. school, college]* to participate, please complete the **Consent Form** on the following page.

This information letter is for you to keep.

Sincerely,



Dr. Maya Haviland  
Centre for Heritage and Museum Studies,  
School of Archaeology and Anthropology,  
College of Arts and Social Sciences,  
Australian National University

#02 6125 9147

#0418 366 699

Maya.Haviland@anu.edu.au

## Kimberley Schools Aboriginal Culture Program Mapping Project

### Principal / Site Manager Consent Form

- I have read this letter and accompanying information sheet and understand the aims, procedures, and risks of this project, as described within it.
- For any questions I may have had, I have taken up the invitation to ask those questions, and I am satisfied with the answers I received.
- I am willing for this *[insert name of school site]* to become involved in the research project, as described.
- I understand that participation in the project is entirely voluntarily.
- I understand that the *[insert name of school site]* is free to withdraw its participation at any time, without affecting the relationship with the research team or the Australian National University.
- I understand that this research may be reported on in a publically available report, be used to inform the broader Kimberley Aboriginal Caring for Culture Plan under development by the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre, and may also be published in scholarly and other journals or books.
- I understand that the *[insert name of school site]* will be provided with a copy of the case study prior to publication for final approval to ensure that privacy of staff and students has been maintained.

Name of Principal/Teacher (printed):

\_\_\_\_\_

Date:    /    /

Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

### KALACC Support for the Inclusion of Kimberley Schools in the Development of a Kimberley Cultural Activities Plan

Dear Educator,

June 2018

You may be aware that the Commonwealth Government is leading the implementation of a Kimberley Regional Suicide Prevention Trial. This trial will run for four years. The scope of the trial is broad, and the approach follows a familiar three part framework often employed for suicide prevention plans:

- Indicated – clinical mental health support for individuals needing acute help;
- Targeted – selected programs for high risk groups
- Universal – primordial, preventative and whole of community approaches to foster wellbeing.

The Commonwealth Government is now pursuing macro policy initiatives to support strengths based approaches to Indigenous wellbeing. In particular we note:

- Close the Gap Refresh <https://closingthegaprefresh.pmc.gov.au/>
- My Life My Lead  
<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/health-mediarel-yr2017-wyatt022.htm>

Within these strengths – based policy initiatives, there is now a strong awareness of the importance of Aboriginal culture towards fostering community wellbeing. This awareness is shared by KALACC and by other members of the Executive Committee to the Kimberley Suicide Prevention Trial. And in line with this awareness, there is a strong desire to map to be the best of our ability the range of culturally based activities which currently take place in the Kimberley. With that in mind, KALACC has across March – June 2018 engaged with about 50 Aboriginal service organisations in the Kimberley and gained a good understanding of what Aboriginal organisations are currently delivering to support cultural activities and to promote universal, whole of community wellbeing.

Beyond the NGO sector, we are very much aware of the critical role that schools play in the life of communities and in the formative development of young people. We urge and strongly encourage you to engage in this process and to provide us with a level of insight in to what your school community is delivering in regards to culturally based activities.

We have engaged Dr Maya Haviland of the Australian National University to act as our lead consultant in regards to mapping the cultural activities taking place in the schools sector in the Kimberley. We would be deeply appreciative if you could respond positively to her requests for assistance and for input in to this process.

Sincerely



**KALACC**

Wes Morris  
Coordinator

M: 0437 809 103  
E: [coordinator@kalacc.org.au](mailto:coordinator@kalacc.org.au)

A: Great Northern Highway, Fitzroy Crossing WA 6765  
T: 08 9191 5317 F: 08 9191 5319

[www.kalacc.org.au](http://www.kalacc.org.au)