Galiwin’ku Whole of Community Engagement Initiative Evaluation Report

Turtle Hunt Metaphor

Report prepared by
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The Historical based on turtle hunt.

“It is based on turtle hunt and it’s regard to sharing experiences. The average/approximate number involved in turtle hunting, is 2/3 people. This team goes in one canoe (dingy) and uses different strategies to catch the turtle. The person which stands and holding s spear is called Djambatj “Great hunter”. He knows when to spear the turtle, the other person next to him looks after the hunter spears the turtle, the person in the middle shares one name while the other ensures no water goes in the canoe. The captain knows where they should go and find the next reef. After they spear the turtle they share the parts according to the turtle.” Written by Beulah Mewura Munyarrryun

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DISCLAIMER
This report was written by the stated authors and does not necessarily represent the views or opinions of the Whole of Community Engagement (WCE) initiative of the Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor - Indigenous Leadership of Charles Darwin University. It provides multiple perspectives and reflections on engagement with a range of stakeholders over time and is not intended to be definitive, comprehensive or imply community consensus with the views expressed.

Warning: Images of deceased persons may appear in this report.

SUGGESTED CITATION
Contents

Collaboration (Ralmanapan’mirr) between WCE and Yalu Marŋgithinyaraw .......................... 2
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................. 2
Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 3
  Yalu Marŋgithinyaraw .................................................................................................... 4
  Yalu Marŋgithinyaraw staff and profiles ...................................................................... 5
  Other Yalu Marŋgithinyaraw Staff ............................................................................ 9
  WCE Staff and Profiles ............................................................................................. 10
Current WCE Staff .......................................................................................................... 10
Former WCE Staff ............................................................................................................ 10
Galiwin’ku Community .................................................................................................... 12
  Local Governance ...................................................................................................... 12
  Community Education Context ................................................................................ 13
Community Engagement Process .................................................................................... 14
Participatory Action Research Process .......................................................................... 19
Partnerships developed through WCE .......................................................................... 21
Key Actions and Achievements. ..................................................................................... 21
  1. Student mentoring at Shepherdson College. .......................................................... 21
  2. Cultural awareness training .................................................................................... 23
  4. Other Yalu WCE initiatives .................................................................................. 28
Community vision ........................................................................................................... 28
The School System ......................................................................................................... 29
Key challenges and outcomes ....................................................................................... 30
Recommendations .......................................................................................................... 31
Future directions ............................................................................................................. 31
A metaphor describing the collaboration between WCE and Yalu ................................. 32
Resources ......................................................................................................................... 32
References ....................................................................................................................... 33
Collaboration (Ralmanapan’mirr) between WCE and Yalu Marŋgithinyaraw

The two drawings on the cover were created by Yalu staff. The first one is titled Turtle Hunting, and it represents the way they work collaboratively to accomplish any task in community. According to Yolŋu culture, nothing is accomplished alone; each team member has an important role. When everyone works together, the aim is achieved. This is how Yolŋu people keep their traditional ways. The second one was painted by local rangers, who are part of the Yalu team, and it is titled Hunting and Food Gathering, 2016.

Acknowledgements

The completion of the Whole of Community Engagement initiative in Galiwin’ku depended upon cooperation and combined efforts of several people and organisations. We are grateful to the Galiwin’ku community, their families, custodians, cultural advisers, Elders and traditional owners who participated in and worked alongside us. Thank you for welcoming us all with an open heart and for your willingness to walk alongside us.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the following people and organisations.

- Rosemary Gundjarranbuy, Elaine Ċawurrpa Maypilama, Evonne Mitjarrandi, Dorothy Bebuka, Beulah Mewura Munyarryun, Delvine Munyarryun, Shelley Houghton and all Yalu Marŋgithinyaraw staff for sharing their wisdom and enthusiasm during the planning and delivery of all activities

- Margaret Miller and Noela Hall for working alongside the cultural advisors and Yalu Marŋgithinyaraw staff to run workshops while supporting Yolŋu and Balanda teachers to learn together

- Simon Cotton (Principal) and John Bradbury (Deputy Principal) at Shepherdson College for providing the space and supporting all WCE activities held within the school

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- Charles Darwin University (CDU), Australian Centre for Indigenous Knowledges in Education (ACIKE), Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE), Northern Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA), The Northern Territory Department of Education (NT DoE)

- The former Office of Pro-Vice Chancellor - Indigenous Leadership (OPVCIL), Professor Steve Larkin, Wendy Ludwig (Acting OPVCIL) and James Smith (WCE Program Manager)

- Cat Street (Evaluation Coordinator) and all other WCE initiative staff.

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1 ‘Yolŋu’ refers to Indigenous people of the East Arnhem region of the Northern Territory.
2 ‘Balanda’ is used to refer to Western people or knowledge systems.
Introduction

The Whole of Community Engagement (WCE) initiative is funded by the Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program (HEPPP) of the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training. This is being led through the Office of Pro Vice Chancellor – Indigenous Leadership at Charles Darwin University in partnership with Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance, and the Northern Territory (NT) Department of Education.

The aim of the WCE initiative is to engage six remote and very remote Indigenous communities in the NT to build aspiration, expectation and capacity for higher education, supporting strong, sustainable pathways from early childhood through to lifelong post-secondary education.

Objectives include:

Using whole-of-community engagement strategies, inspire six targeted remote and very remote Indigenous communities to include higher education among their normal expectations, by:

- exploring current community perspectives of higher education, and linking with existing strategies for achieving quality of life aspirations;
- co-creating ongoing opportunities for community, research, academic and public policy leaders to engage in mutually beneficial and critical relationships; and
- identifying means for making education relevant and culturally and physically accessible with a view to establishing strong and sustainable educational pathways from early childhood to lifelong post-secondary education.

Galiwin’ku is one of the six communities in the NT participating in the WCE initiative and one of the two communities located in the East Arnhem region. Other communities WCE has worked in partnership with include Maningrida and Gunbalanya (West Arnhem), Yirrkala (East Arnhem) and Tennant Creek and Yuendumu (Central Desert).

The planning and implementation of WCE in Galiwin’ku has been approached as a partnership between CDU and Yalu Marŋgithinyaraw and has predominantly focused on engagement with the local school, Shepherdson College.
Yalu Marnŋithinyaraw

Yalu is a Yolŋu word meaning “bird’s nest.” In this case, Yalu is a metaphor for the learning or nurturing place. It was established to support the community by providing education related workshops and conducting research on education, health and wellbeing. Yalu Marnŋithinyaraw began in April 2000, when Elaine Läwurrpa Maypilama was contracted by the Aboriginal Tropical Health Unit in Darwin to explore connections between health and education in the community. It was a trial project of six months. Many ideas were generated as a consequence of the research and community consultations, and plan of action emerged. Since then Yalu has have become stronger and gained the respect and appreciation of the community. Yalu’s philosophy is simple, in the words of Dorothy Bebuka (depicted by Yalu’s logo below):

The egg in the nest is about to hatch and the mother nurtures the young chick so it can learn to fly. Then she hands it over to the men, for the next stage in his life, where he will grow and develop. That is why we call ourselves Yalu, because it is the women who are nurturing the egg.

![Yalu Marnŋithinyaraw’s logo.](image)

For the last 16 years, Yalu has delivered a variety of workshops and education sessions and worked alongside Charles Darwin University (CDU), as well as other universities and organisations on a number of research projects. As a result of these collaborations, a large amount of resources (videos, photos, educational material) have been produced and used to enhance the capacity of the local Yolŋu community.

According to Yalu’s Manager, Rosemary Gundjarranbuy:

We have a hub called Yalu where all the people meet and share Yolŋu culture. We have a strong culture and strong beliefs that need to be taught to the children so they can keep our culture strong. Yalu is a place where we share our strong knowledge of this island and we are connected to this land, the sea, the trees, the rocks, the sand, the clouds, the sun, the moon, and the stars. At Yalu, Yolŋu people can come and learn in Yolŋu room and Yolŋu ways. They can feel comfortable and share what is best for the community. This is the way Yalu operates: Yolŋu run the show. Yalu is a place where we can meet together, both young and old. Yalu is where everything starts, and it is a place to strengthen children and families and a nurturing centre of our lifestyle.

Yolŋu educators work within a model of providing access to meaningful information in local languages. They achieved this by being responsive to local cultural and communication protocols.
Yalu Marŋgithinyaraw staff and profiles

WCE staff worked alongside the manager of Yalu Marŋgithinyaraw, Rosemary Gundjarranbuy, in the WCE initiative. The following Yalu staff, whose photos and respective profiles are shown below, delivered or collaborated on the delivery of a number of activities.

Rosemary Gundjarranbuy is the current manager of the Yalu Marŋgithinyaraw. She is a senior Yolŋu educator and researcher who has extensive experience in school-based as well as health education. She has also worked on a range of other community projects related to youth wellbeing, aged care and child development research. Over the past three years, Gundjarranbuy has worked as the Coordinator of ‘Sharing the Full and True Stories about Chronic Conditions Project’, which was a partnership between CDU and Yalu Marŋgithinyaraw. Gundjarranbuy is currently managing WCE and other projects related to early childhood, higher education participation as well as a number of other research and service delivery projects.
Elaine Łäwurrpa Maypilama is a resident of Galiwin’ku and an experienced Yolŋu researcher. She belongs to the Warramirri clan and connects to Galiwin’ku through her father’s father. She also speaks many dialects of Yolŋu Matha. Łäwurrpa has worked extensively with CDU and Menzies School of Health for over twenty years, and has skillfully guided many non-Indigenous researchers to work with Yolŋu in ways that are ethical, mutually beneficial, and enable non-Indigenous and Yolŋu to understand each other’s knowledges. She is also a founder of the Yalu’ Marŋgithinyaraw Centre in Galiwin’ku. Łäwurrpa has an Associate Diploma in Teaching (Batchelor Institute) and an Honorary Doctorate (CDU).

Dorothy Bebuka is from the Waramirri clan group. She speaks Gupapuyngu, Djambarrpuynugu and English languages. Dorothy works as a community worker for Yalu Marŋgithinyaraw supporting all programs and processes to strengthen and support families in the community. Her interests include helping people with difficulties, bringing Yolŋu law into programs and hunting.

Evonne Mitjarrandi is a qualified teacher with over 25 years of teaching experience. Currently she is working as a senior mentor and researcher in Galiwin’ku Yalu Marŋgithinyaraw Centre. Mitja’s interests include strengthening Yolŋu culture, language and traditions and she works passionately to incorporate these elements into the mentoring program.
**Beulah Mewura Munyarryun** is a Junior Mentor:

“My role is to mentor and coach the students at school and also see how they behave at school. I’m also helping the kids to develop their skills and telling them to stop teasing each other and focus on their work. Our job is to go down to the school, sit and help them understand or direct and guide them on their work. I love this work because it helps our children focus on their education and develop their skills, and to show them good pathways for their future.”

Mirrmirryun Beulah Munyarryun

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**Delvine Munyarryun** is a Junior Mentor:

“I work for WCE at Yalu. I’m 31 years old and I would like to help the students develop their skills and stop teasing each other. I always wanted to help develop a program for them. Having groups for mentoring sessions is a good opportunity as it helps them learn good skills and get good education for securing a good future in school/community.”

Delvine Munyarryun
Margaret Miller is a teacher with over 30 years of experience working at Galiwinku in teaching and translation work and who has, on numerous occasions, run literacy courses at Galiwin’ku. She is currently employed by Yalu Marngithinyaraw and worked on the CDU-WCE cultural awareness training program. Margaret’s work on Elcho Island began as a qualified teacher with the Department of Education at Shepherdson College from 1981-1990, performing a variety of roles including cross cultural training in Djambarrpuyŋu. She has since been involved with the Djambarrpuyŋu Bible Translation Team translating the New Testament and promoting scriptures in Djambarrpuyŋu and other Yolŋu languages.

Shelley Houghton left the commercial sector in 1981, spending the following 17 years working with Indigenous Australians as part of Aboriginal Resource and Development Services (ARDS). Most of this time was spent assisting communities in areas of financial management and as a community educator. Shelley then worked for nine years as an accountant and CEO with local Indigenous councils in the Torres Strait, before moving into roles in West Papua in 2005, including establishing a successful grass-roots clean water program under the West Papuan Development Company. Shelley was the Organisation Mentor for Yalu Marngithinyaraw during the time WCE was working alongside Yalu Marngithinyaraw.
Noela Hall worked as a bilingual coordinator and Teacher Linguist for Shepherdson College from 1974 to 2012. Under the WCE Initiative, Noela delivered the Learning Together sessions, in October and early November, 2016.

Figure 9: Noela Hall facilitating biliteracy sessions at Shepherdson College.

Other Yalu Marŋgithinyaraw Staff

- Dorothy Gapany
- Lydia Baywani
- Aaron Mitjindi Wunungmurra
- Hazel Gondarra
- Lillian Marika
- Stephen Malwarriwuy Dhamarrandji
- Doris Yethun
- Manuel Dhurrkay
- Julian Redmond
WCE Staff and Profiles

Current WCE Staff

Dr Eliani Boton (Mentor and Engagement Officer, March - December 2016) has over 26 years working in the education sector and holds a PhD in Education (eLearning). Her areas of expertise include online course design and delivery, as well as the integration of culturally inclusive and appropriate pedagogical strategies for high student engagement and retention. She joined the Whole of Community Engagement initiative in March 2016, following her interest in supporting Indigenous students who aspire to further their studies.

Former WCE Staff

Dr Bronwyn Rossingh (Community Engagement Leader, September 2014 - June 2016) has experience working with and for Aboriginal organisations and communities in Western Australia and the NT, and this extends over 25 years. She has been working in the education domain for over seven years. Bronwyn is a Fellow of CPA Australia, an editor for the Evaluation Journal of Australasia and a reviewer for the Alter Native-An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples. Bronwyn seeks to encourage and support Indigenous people to drive research and other projects in accordance with their own vision and aspirations.
Dr Matalena Tofa (Mentor and Engagement Officer, November 2014 to December 2015) is from Aotearoa New Zealand. She has a PhD in human geography from Macquarie University and a Masters of Education from QUT. Her research interests include Indigenous rights, Indigenous development, postcolonial and postdevelopment theory, collaborative and participatory practices, environmental management, and social impacts.

Dr Ławurrpa Maypilama (Community Research Leader, January 2015 - October 2015) – see profile on page 6.
Galiwin’ku Community

Galiwin’ku is an Indigenous (Yolŋu) community situated approximately 550km northeast from Darwin on Elcho Island. The Island is around 50kms long and 6kms wide. Being the largest community in East Arnhem land, Galiwin’ku is based at the southern end of Elcho Island and has a seasonal population of around 2200.

Figure 13: Galiwin’ku community.

According to The Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation (2012, para. 5) there is a large number of tribal groups in Galiwin’ku. These include Wulkarra, Wangurri, Golpa, Guyamirrilil, Gumatj, Birrkili, Daywurrwurr (Gupapuyngu), Warramirri, Dhalwangu, Ritharrangu and Ganalbingu. There are 22 different dialects spoken in the community and Djambarrpuynyu is the most widely used in Galwin’ku. Galpa, Golpa, Golumala, Gumatj, Liya’gawumirr, Wangurri, Warramiri and Gupauyngu are also spoken.

Galiwin’ku has a local health centre that provides comprehensive primary health services to the community. There are also a range of public health and targeted program activities that aim to educate and improve access to health services and information for the community. There are many artists in Galiwin’ku whose arts and crafts can be seen in the local Elcho Island Art and Craft Centre. Regular exhibitions for these works are held across the Northern Territory. The local artists specialise in producing both traditional Yolŋu style art as well as more contemporary designs. The artists produce bark paintings and hand carved, painted hollow logs. They make a variety of baskets, bags and jewellery using fibres and also create wonderful sculptural works. Some Elcho artists have travelled overseas to exhibit and promote their crafts, with great success.

Local Governance

The East Arnhem Shire Council provides local government services for Galiwin’ku, which is in the Shire’s Gumurr Marthakal Ward. The Gumurr Marthakal Ward is one of six wards in the Shire and elects three of the 14 council members. The Shire headquarters are in Nhulunbuy and it has a service delivery centre in Galiwin’ku (East Arnhem Shire Council, 2012). The Council is comprised of representatives of each clan group that lives in Galiwin’ku. The Council policies reflect pride in Yolŋu culture and traditions. The Council also adopts an advocacy role for the community in the wider Australian context.

The Galiwin’ku community is keen to enhance Yolŋu governance and leadership and streamline consultancy processes. Their traditional Yolŋu systems of governance remain very strong and they see themselves as living under Indigenous law first and Balanda law second.
Community Education Context

Shepherdson College is the local school, offering education from preschool to Year 12. The Bilingual Program at Shepherdson College started in 1974. The school has currently about 700 students enrolled and continues to offer a comprehensive bilingual education program from preschool to primary. Senior secondary have the opportunity to do Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses and complete the Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training.

Their bilingual program has a strong learning focus on literacy and numeracy through the two languages of Djambarrpuynu and English. Formal English reading and writing begins in Year 4. Delivery of classes is done by teaching teams, formed by non-Indigenous and Yolŋu teachers, who work together in a rich cross-cultural teaching and learning context. Shepherdson College describes itself as a ‘Learning on Country’ school, which endeavours to bring cultural meaning to the traditional curriculum. Shepherdson College offers a cultural education program and a nutrition program for healthy lunches is also provided.

Key Stakeholders

On 19 November 2014, the Manager of Yalu Marŋgithinyaraw Indigenous Corporation, Ms Rosemary Gundjarranbuy provided a letter of support that Yalu Marŋgithinyaraw was “interested in improving and strengthening education pathways for the people of the Galiwin’ku community...We would like to work closely with your team and look forward to improving and strengthening educational pathways together.” Further community engagement work took place over the subsequent months, ultimately resulting in the establishment of two service level agreements (SLAs) between both agencies.

The first service agreement between CDU and Yalu concluded in December 2015. Another service agreement was signed off in May 2016 to continue this partnership throughout 2016. This service agreement involved a number of activities, which were made possible thanks to Shepherdson College. Those activities were conducted within the school, with the support of the Principal, Deputy Principal and all teaching staff.
Community Engagement Process

Galiwin’ku was one of the six preferred communities agreed by the WCE Steering Group. Community consultation commenced in October 2014 with key community members from Galiwin’ku about what the scope of WCE could be. Regular attendance at meetings with community leaders, school principals and staff, and community events underpinned the engagement process in Galiwin’ku. Importantly, early engagement included the proposed establishment of a ‘backbone’ committee to provide guidance about project priorities and activities. Its establishment was initially supported by Dr Bronwyn Rossingh and Dr Elaine Lawurrpa Maypilama. The inaugural meeting took place on 29 October 2014. Due to a wide range of reasons the committee did not continue to meet as a group on a regular basis. Rather, key stakeholders from that committee remained involved in individual or small group discussions throughout the course of the WCE initiative. There was, however, strong interest in the project from the outset. The WCE objectives were also formally presented to Yalu Marnŋithinyaraw Indigenous Corporation in October 2014 and later to the East Arnhem Advisory Council - Community Advisory Board on 10 December 2014. A letter of support and a respective affirmative motion reflected the community support and preference for a partnership approach.

Initial themes identified during the early community engagement process included:

- High concern about the current education pathways in Galiwin’ku
- High concern that employment pathways are very limited due to the low mainstream education levels of Yolŋu people
- Bi-lingual education needs to be valued and strengthened
- Adult learners need more training options linked to academic levels and qualifications that will lead to a higher employment status
- There is a need to develop a stronger engagement process between community and schools so Yolŋu feel comfortable in talking to teachers
- Structured pathway learning ‘from aspirations to reality’ should be explored

Figure 15: Backbone Committee Inaugural Meeting.
WCE staff were unable to travel to Galiwin’ku for over two months due to Cyclone Lam (February 2015) and Cyclone Nathan (March 2015). Cyclone Lam was a Category four cyclone and caused extensive damage to housing and infrastructure in Galiwin’ku (Elcho Island). In addition to broader traumatic impacts of this event, significant damage was done to the Yalu office. For two months, staff were working in a donga, approximately 12 x 6 metres in size, and sharing the space with staff of two other programs. This brought huge challenges for the running of programs managed by the organisation, which included the WCE initiative.

This made it extremely difficult to progress the community engagement process ‘on the ground’ during the early stages of the initiative (although it also meant that Dr Maypilama was supported to travel to Darwin to continue planning during this chaotic period). Community priorities were re-directed towards housing and infrastructure development at that time. In tandem, there were constant changes to school leadership during this period (i.e. ten different principals across the course of the first 18 months). These delays and constant changes were problematic, yet planning and implementation continued in consultation with community stakeholders, wherever possible. Targeted activities occurred during this re-introduction period, including mentoring sessions with six young people in relation to pathway development and access to VET and HE courses; and four students and a teacher from Shepherdson College were supported to attend the Menzies School of Health Research (MSHR) Pathways Program.

Community ownership was always deemed as being very important. As previously discussed, a SLA was drafted with Yalu Marŋgithinyaraw to implement activities such as mentoring programs; culturally appropriate training and support for researchers and mentors; two-way learning approaches to strengthen understandings of Western and Indigenous knowledge systems within an educational setting; community education and employment pathway mapping; and cultural advice, guidance and linguistic support to WCE staff. This SLA was formally executed on 29th June 2015. Implementation of the SLA commenced in July 2015. Two staff commenced as community-based mentors – Beulah Munyarryun and Hazel Gondarra. Early activities included:

- hosting community planning sessions to brainstorm ideas and seek guidance and advice from community leaders for the WCE initiative;
- recruitment of new Indigenous researchers for collecting of stories on the educational experiences of community members;
• training and mentorship of community based researchers, regarding interviews, transcribing and reporting;
• planning for after-school sessions and working with disengaged students; and
• developing education pathway maps.

There were many learnings during the development and implementation of the first SLA, which were used to inform subsequent consultation associated with the parameters of the second SLA. The process of negotiating the parameters of each SLA is best conceptualised as an ongoing learning process between both parties.

![Educational pathway map created by Yalu and WCE (top) Rosemary Gundjarranbuy explaining how Yolnu navigate educational pathways to the rangers (middle) and Yalu staff explaining the education pathway map to the students (bottom).](image)

There was a change in the Mentor and Engagement Officer role in the East Arnhem region at the beginning of 2016. The recruitment process was undertaken in February to re-appoint to this role. The selection panel included community representatives from both Yirrkala and Galiwin’ku. Dr Eliani Boton was subsequently appointed to this role on 7th March, 2016.
A high-level Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was executed between CDU, Menzies and Yalu’ in March 2016. This was useful for informing the development of a subsequent Service Level Agreement between CDU and Yalu Marnggithinyaraw in May 2016, as part of the WCE initiative.

After additional consultation with Yalu Marnggithinyaraw, it was decided that an ‘emergent’ rather than a ‘structured’ approach was most appropriate. This ensured community ownership of the delivery of services and it was paramount to their development. Yalu Marnggithinyaraw had autonomy over all aspects of the activities developed and delivered, which resulted in greater commitment of the community members involved and high participation in the activities established through the SLA.

Genuine relationships have been developed through respectful consultation with the community members. At times WCE staff had to ask questions and seek clarity about the preferred course of action, considering each community has its own specific needs. The learning that came about as a result of critical reflection and based on feedback from Yalu’ staff resulted in respectful community consultation, which was highly valued. This process was expected to take time, considering Indigenous people prioritise the obligations they have to their own communities ahead of any other responsibilities with outside organisations and that there are many other contextual challenges. Despite some of these challenges, in the last stage of the initiative negotiations were flowing easily. Yalu Marnggithinyaraw had ownership of the process, including design and delivery of activities.

WCE staff who worked in Galiwin’ku had many years’ experience working within remote Indigenous communities. The engagement strategies adopted throughout the course of WCE evolved, however, in response to the unique community context. WCE staff made sure that they scheduled visits to the community after consulting with Yalu staff about the most appropriate time. There were instances that travel had to be postponed due to local cultural events, funerals and/or ceremonies. The programs delivered as part of the WCE initiative had a strong focus in valuing local Aboriginal culture, knowledges and language, reflected in the sessions for teaching staff and student mentoring activities.
Allowing time for the work partnership to be established and have the flexibility to shape activities in the way that is culturally appropriate for the community proved to be successful. This is supported by Yalu staff, who observed enthusiasm and a high number of participants and attendance in many activities delivered in collaboration with Shepherdson College.

‘Both ways’ learning is a term commonly emphasised in Galiwin’ku; and when initiatives or programs, and their design, encompass cultural knowledge this leads to a greater commitment among local people. Having their own cultural and contextual perspectives built into their work makes their contribution to the community a more meaningful one. This led to some success in a number of activities as they developed, particularly during the later stages of this initiative.

Some other features of the relationship between WCE and Yalu that played an important role in its development are below:

- Focusing on community strengths rather than deficits
- Allowing time for reflections and decision-making
- Being flexible and understanding of the ‘emergent’ nature of what happens in the community
- Allowing flexibility for cultural practices and knowledge to underpin all activities
- Establishing a relationship based on mutual respect and interest
- Supporting Yolŋu control, empowerment and project ownership
- Having a Service Agreement with opportunities for the employment of community-based staff for the delivery of services
- Community-based staff (Yalu) developing their own rules and responsibilities, in writing, for each staff involved in the delivery of services
- Having all plans, reports and documents written alongside and approved by community-based staff

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3 ‘Both ways learning’ refers to an approach in which learning together occurs through the sharing of Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledges (Christie, 1987; Bayukarrpi et al 1994; Marika, 1999; Bat & Shore, 2013).
Participatory Action Research Process

The Galiwinku WCE initiative was participatory action research project. Explicit research activities to collect data on the higher education journeys of community members were conducted throughout the two years, and this formed part of the overall project, and actions were then implemented based on emerging findings. At the beginning of the initiative interviews and other research activities collecting data around Galiwin’ku community perspectives and experiences of higher education were sometimes performed by campus based staff. Sometimes these were conducted with the support of a local Indigenous researcher, and were conducted in both English and Yolŋu Matha.

The approach that we took to obtaining informed consent, which included communicating in local language, can be found at:

http://www.cdu.edu.au/research/ori/exemplar-cdu-research-project

Recognition of preferences for Indigenous-led research processes informed a different approach at later stages of the initiative. Non-Indigenous researchers cannot operate from Indigenous standpoints, even when this can be partly achieved by having a strong sense of cultural sensitivity and through following careful consideration of Indigenous research methods (Guenther, 2015). For the second SLA and after discussions with Yalu staff, it was decided that interviews were going to be performed and analysed by local Yolŋu researchers only. This allowed those being interviewed to feel more comfortable in sharing their views and stories, and for analysis from the Yolŋu standpoint. Evaluation evidence suggests that the new approach was preferred. Interviews were done “the Yolŋu way”, which means they were conducted in the form of narratives, or storytelling, where the interviewer asks questions that help people to tell stories about their experiences in their own way and from their own perspectives.

This change of approach emphasised community control and led to a high number of participants within a short time frame and considering the significant number of other programs of Yalu were running simultaneously. Research done by remote Indigenous community researchers takes time. Often both questions and responses involve a significant reflective process, and are explained in a way that tells a story. This is in contrast to a more direct approach often seen in the mainstream world. Participants were asked to present views on their education journey, challenges, successes and their recommendations for the improvement of pathways to further education. A total of eighteen interviews, including three school graduates, two school teachers, seven parents and six other community members were completed. Findings are presented in Figure 20.
What worked well?

• In the past (about 20 years ago), teachers who taught English and Yolŋu Matha used to be strict and requested that students read/write in both languages. That teaching style worked well.
• People had increased confidence as a result of completing further education.
• Education was a way to understand the Western world.
• Parents who completed further education are examples for the young adults who are now willing to follow their steps.

What were the challenges?

• Being away from home (for the ones who had to leave the community to acquire a diploma/degree).
• Having to learn academic English.
• Meeting cultural obligations.

What could help/support learning (looking into the future)?

• Continuous mentoring support (throughout the year, preferably daily).
• Parents need to support young students to leave the community temporarily to further their studies.
• Being able to attend cultural obligations.
• Professional development programs for Yolŋu teachers.
• Catering for students with special needs.
• Case management arrangements (mentors/teachers) supporting students who are having difficulties.
• Strategies to increase motivation to learn in the classroom (i.e., games and other activities).
• Increased participation between parents and the school (more meetings to discuss students’ learning and how parents can support this, i.e., talking with students about the importance of attending school and completing their education).

Other emerging themes:

• Learning outcomes have worsened – students are struggling to read and write (including Yolŋu Matha, not only English).
• There are more cases of young kids struggling with depression.
• Learning content needs to be engaging and culturally responsive (this is not always the way).
• More Yolŋu teachers need to move from being teacher assistants to fully qualified teachers.
• Need to engage and empower students for higher attendance. Cultural activities need to continue to be delivered in and out of school.
• Yolŋu teachers need to be an example of leadership in the way they present themselves in the classroom (self-confidence leading to leadership).
• More clear pathway from education to employment.
• Yolŋu pedagogy in all areas and levels of education.
• English literacy and numeracy to be offered to the whole community continuously – there are very low levels at the moment, including the ones who finish school.

Figure 19: Summary of emerging issues from interviews conducted in Galiwin’ku.
In 2016, the participatory action research cycle involved development of an action plan that had been developed through consultation with Yalu and the school. The action plan contained a number of specific strategies that would be implemented in partnership with the school. These are listed below.

1. Provision of IT resources to support research and other activities
2. Research and research capacity building activities
3. Employment of two Mentors and implementation of a mentoring program in the school
4. Employment of a Skills Development Officer to support the ongoing development of Yalu staff
5. Workforce development of Yolŋu teachers
6. Delivery of activities for education related workshops/training that promotes awareness of pathways into higher education
7. Ongoing funding for Yalu Manager for leadership, coordination and support for Yalu staff
8. Development and implementation of a Cultural Induction package for school staff

This action plan was reviewed, updated, and amended where necessary roughly once a month. The WCE campus based staff member worked with Yalu staff to reflect on and document progress on this action plan. Through learning what was and wasn’t working based on feedback and observations, some strategies were adjusted. These ‘tweaks’ were an important part of developing actions so that they would be better suited to the needs of stakeholders and therefore saw improvements in the process as the initiative progressed.

**Partnerships developed through WCE**

The main partnership that was nurtured through this project was between Yalu’ Marŋgithinyaraw and Shepherdson College. They worked in collaboration for the delivery of all activities established through the service agreement signed between CDU and Yalu. In addition to the service agreement, a longer-term MoU has been executed between Menzies, CDU and Yalu Marŋgithinyaraw to ensure sustainability of relationships beyond the timeframe of the WCE initiative. Negotiations for this MoU, and an event in Galiwinku to launch and celebrate the MoU, were supported by the WCE team.

**Key Actions and Achievements**

The following sections present some of the activities delivered as part of the second SLA with some comments on their successes and challenges. Consent was obtained to record participants’ quotes and their identity has been kept confidential.

1. **Student mentoring at Shepherdson College**

For the mentoring activities, the Mentor and Engagement Officer and the mentors had a meeting to discuss how they envisaged their work to be delivered within the school in 2016. The mentors explained that they see a real difference between the Balanda way of mentoring and the Yolŋu way. The mentors say that going to school and supporting students with reading and writing is not enough. It is important that students learn traditional ways, which includes respect for elders, so they can also respect their teachers in class, who are mostly Balanda. According to the mentors, it is by learning their traditional ways that students are able to develop respect for others, listen to the teachers in school, and then progress with their studies. They report that it is by having role models that these students feel the desire to learn more, to become role models themselves and learn new skills, which lead them to become
more interested in continuing their studies. From these discussions, mentoring began to be delivered at Shepherdson College in 2016.

Figure 20: A mentoring class at Shepherdson College.

They also explained that it is crucial that a variety of activities are given to students so they feel engaged but are also learning other things that are important for their development and independence. These things include cultural protocols that are related to how students should behave in front of their parents and elders, but also within the school with other students and the teachers.

Figure 21: Yolŋu teacher presenting higher education pathways to Shepherdson College students.

The total number of students mentored from June until November 2016 was thirty-two, from years five to eight. The total number of students attending classes per day was between five and seven as a maximum. Classes were initially roughly three times a week, which reduced later on in the year. A senior Yalu staff member led these activities with the support of two junior mentors. To support the mentoring program, the school allocated a room for the mentors to deliver their activities. The mentoring team developed reports to present to the Deputy Principal and the teachers. During meetings they analysed what the students required and any improvements were noted. Teachers and mentors started to make
joint decisions on the type of activities to be given to students. According to the senior mentor and school staff who were involved, the students who participated in the sessions started to demonstrate more interest in the classes, were learning more, and teachers were becoming increasingly supportive of the mentoring sessions.

Some early challenges in consultation and unavoidable ceremonial events impacted on its continuity, however, as eventually the frequency of classes slowed down towards the end of 2016. Yalu and the school recommended in future spending more time discussing the structure of the program to ensure that it is embedded. As it was not, there was some miscommunication between the two organisations and it did not continue in the final part of the year. Importantly, the junior mentors were not able to provide support for many weeks due to a sequence of ceremonies in the community.

The mentors did a good job of engaging with the students, however, it was recommended by Yalu staff that it would be beneficial in future to go through a formal recruitment process so that more experienced staff could apply. The mentors had only limited access to books and other teaching resources, which was a challenge for them. All this aside, it was seen as something that did bring benefits for students by both the school and Yalu and the school is interested in continuing this program in the future.

Mentors supported Learning on Country program cultural activities, which is delivered through the school and highly valued. There has also been participation of other community members and elders during other cultural activities, delivered as part of school mentoring, as well as during the cultural awareness training delivered within Shepherdson College to all teaching staff. Their participation has been crucial and contributed to the success of all activities. They have participated through sharing their knowledge, telling local stories and explaining cultural protocols.

2. Cultural awareness training

Bilingual education and the Learning Together idea within the school has a long history. The school has been bilingual now for forty years, and part of this has, over time, been around strengthening the team teaching idea. This has, more recently, fluctuated depending on school leadership but has in the past included learning about things like gurrutu (the kinship system), local Indigenous culture and cultural identity to support a strong working relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff.

Yalu Marngithinyaraw, in collaboration with Shepherdson College, organised and delivered an eight week cultural awareness training program, supported by local cultural advisers and with the participation of all available teaching staff. After gathering ideas, views and suggestions from teaching staff, the cultural advisers started to organise their first few workshops. Part of the intention was to support the reestablishment of Learning Together. Attendance and participation was higher than expected, with most teachers attending, with the exception of when there were funerals/ceremonies in community. The total of participants attending were 42 in 8 sessions, with an average of 30 attending each class.

The first few workshops presented an introduction to gurrutu. The group learnt about the complexity in differing levels of relationships and how reciprocal bonds of relationship work. Non-Indigenous participants were able to develop a basic understanding of what it is, how it works and start to become more familiar with the names used to describe the different family relationships. As most people working in Galiwin’ku have been ‘adopted’ into Yolŋu families, it has been an opportunity for everyone to understand the kinship structure better.

The facilitators gave the participants some fun activities so people could understand how connected they are with others around them. Adopting non-Yolŋu people into their families is a way for Yolŋu people to
be able to understand how they should relate with you. It is also a way of demonstrating that want to support everyone who lives or frequently visits their community, as in the words of the facilitator to the group:

“Now you know how connected you are with all the other people in this room and in this community. We are here to support you, that’s why you have been adopted into our families. You are never alone.”

Testament to this, a Balanda staff member who attended the training sessions stated:

“… it was actually said by the Yolŋu people at the Learning Together that they acknowledged that we’ve left our families and we don’t have connections here and made it a very, very strong point that we make connections now. This is how we can do it and yeah, I don’t know. I don’t mean to sound over-emotional on it, but it’s actually to be able to stay here long term, happily, it’s very important.”

The facilitators explained the importance for all teachers to perform a similar gurrutu activity in class on the first day to allow students to get to know their relationship with one another and with their teachers. The cultural advisors explained that this supports student engagement and has also a role in minimising bullying, as kids become aware of their family connections with one other. Due to the success of these workshops and being very well received by all teaching staff, the staff requested that they continued to be delivered throughout Term 3. The additional classes continued to be well attended.
The philosophy of Learning Together is extremely important to Yolŋu teachers in Galiwin’ku. One Yolŋu teacher reported that:

“… if both school and the community work together… It’s very, very supportive that way. Some of our colleagues here at Shepherdson College for instance, like Balanda teachers, they are new to this community… that person as a teacher, is an English speaker, they don’t have Yolŋu language or understanding. If it doesn’t continue, how can we try and support those yothu [children]?”

It was anecdotally reported that attendance of Yolŋu teachers had increased towards the end of the year. In 2016, the school saw more stable school leadership and re-establishment of the Learning on Country program, as well as delivery of cultural awareness training. It would be impossible to determine a single factor that has caused this, however, the school reports that a number of factors have contributed to a positive change in the school environment and increase in the Yolŋu voice.

A senior non-teaching staff member commented that:

“The program has certainly been important in that huge cultural shift and shift in expectations in what happens in the school and what the Yolŋu voice is… [The cultural awareness training] is certainly something that everyone can see the value of… Indigenous attendance; Assistant Teachers had really dropped off, but that has started to really pick up again so a lot more of our Indigenous vocation staff staying and taking part.”

A number of non-Indigenous teachers mentioned that the workshops have made them reflect on their role as a teacher in the community. One staff member who was relatively new to her role in the school said:

“It’s taught me a lot about how to work within the community. I’ve learnt a lot about the relationships and listening and understanding; patience…”

Although the cultural awareness training was only running for a relatively short term, it was received very well by the school. A video was produced by the facilitators to document the training (refer to ‘Resources’). In 2017, it is envisaged that the partnership developed between Yalu and Shepherdson College will support further work in relation to cultural awareness and other Learning Together sessions, subject to funding availability to support this.
3. Supporting the workforce development of Yolŋu assistant teachers: Learning Together

Yalu organised weekly meetings with Yolŋu teachers every Friday at Shepherdson College from July 2016. During these meetings, the teachers wrote a collective statement containing an outline of what they would like to see happening in the school (relating to their work as Assistant Teachers). The document is in Yolŋu Matha. It identifies important areas such as how to work with the Balanda teachers and parents to discipline students; the dynamics of their team work with the Balanda teachers and how to create balance and harmony, how they can be more productive as well as assertive in the classroom, and other matters related to their own professional development.

These are now the focus of discussions between Yalu (representing the Yolŋu teachers) and school management. According to a staff member who is a teacher, translator and co-facilitator of the cultural awareness training, some small changes were starting to occur as a result of positive responses from the Principal and Deputy Principal. One of the examples was that parents were being invited to go to the school for discussions with the team teachers regarding students’ behaviour in class. She also added that this was the first time she had seen the Yolŋu teachers present such assertiveness. She reports that the continuous meetings and support received from Yalu staff has helped them to develop this assertiveness. Yalu collected feedback from Yolŋu Teachers and the responses were very positive.

After consultation with teaching staff, it was decided that professional development activities for Yolŋu teachers should be shaped slightly differently. In addition to individual support that a consultant provided to Yolŋu teachers who were completing the Bachelor Degree, a sequence of workshops was suggested, which was agreed to by the Principal. These sessions were eventually held during Learning Together time, as the cultural awareness training sessions had finished. Balanda teachers were also invited and encouraged to attend.

The sessions focused on developing biliteracy knowledge and skills and aimed to value, retain and develop staff. This became the focus of the Learning Together sessions because proficiency in literacy is a prerequisite for effective teaching and learning in all subject areas. Learning Together is a historical practice of ‘both ways’ learning, which includes weekly sessions where Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff have the opportunity to share with, and learn from each other. These sessions were held weekly for a total of eight weeks. Some of the ideas underpinning the planning of these teacher-learner experiences were based on the Dimensions of Learning Model, as well as Freire’s theory of critical pedagogy. The facilitator explained that Yolŋu staff need higher levels of literacy in both English and Yolŋu Matha to be able to assist in the planning and delivery of a ‘two-way’ curriculum. On the other hand, Balanda staff need greater knowledge and understanding of the Yolŋu language, culture and world view to be able to assist in the planning and delivery of the curriculum. All staff need more knowledge, understanding and experience around language and literacy acquisition. A brief outline of the purpose and scope of the program is shown below in Figure 22. A video about this program was also produced (refer to ‘Resources’).
a) Developing successful and sustainable team teaching practices:

- Developing teaching teams
- Developing a culture of working in teams that sees all members of the College staff as equals, as both teachers and learners, valuing and sharing knowledge and expertise
- Developing whole school ownership of the team teaching approach.

b) Scope and sequence of the program

This course was designed as a series of eight sessions of literacy instruction for both Yolŋu and Balanda staff to improve knowledge of decoding skills, including phonemic awareness and phonics, grammar, syntax, reading fluency, reading fluency, vocabulary and comprehension of both English and Yolŋu Matha. It included a balanced and integrated range of listening, speaking, reading and writing activities in both Yolŋu Matha and English that required learners to be code breakers, meaning makers and critical users and analysts of texts. Each session included development of phonological awareness, graphophonics, vocabulary and comprehension, reading and writing fluency and socio-cultural concepts about reading and writing. The course provided opportunity to create texts for the future use of college students in a range of learning areas and included explicit teaching and learning of spelling, grammar and punctuation.

It was a priority for the community to get Learning Together practices back up and running because quite a lot of staff turnover had meant that these sessions had not been happening for a while and new non-Indigenous teachers had not yet understood the Learning Together philosophy. One of the school staff commented that a big part of the workshops is about highlighting to non-Indigenous staff:

“How important the role of the assistant teacher is... It’s not just to yell at kids and sharpen pencils but actually as a mediator of relationships and a deliverer of first language and materials and to listen to these children’s conversations and say here’s where these children are at.”
Below are the comments from one Yolŋu teacher:

*We always wanted to learn together with Balanda. We want to walk together and learn together. I feel proud to be here today as we are helping Balanda teachers learn our language and how important it is to communicate properly with our kids in the classroom. We are becoming a strong team now. It is our vision and we are starting to achieve this by learning and sharing together.*

The *Learning Together* bilingual literacy sessions had a total of 46 participants, with an average of 33 attending weekly, as during that period the community had a few ceremonies that prevented some Yolŋu teachers to attend.

### 4. Other Yalu WCE initiatives

Foundation skills include a combination of English language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills, digital literacy, mathematical ideas in addition to employability skills such as collaboration, problem solving and information and communication technology skills (SCOTEESE, 2012). Such skills are essential to participation in the workforce, and bring benefits to individuals, workplaces and communities. Financial support for the Skills Development Officer and for the ongoing employment of the Yalu Manager contributed to the development of these skills of Yalu staff and therefore the development of Yalu as an organisation. However, this is very much part of an ongoing process and there are many other factors involved. The Manager reported that several new staff members have developed confidence in doing planning activities and record keeping. Attendance of five Yalu staff members at the Remote Indigenous Youth Leaders’ Summit contributed to this.

“... he’s getting that confidence now and I think for the next step is going to be probably stepping forward to probably either like example, to either my position or probably, we will put him to in charge of the staff, like for later on”

“I’ve seen all my team, they changed. They wanted to do - when I gave them like, ‘You want to do the planning for next week’s program to school?’ and it was like [clicks fingers] ‘boom!’ they just went straight and they did their own planning.”

According to the Yalu Manager, the key achievements for Yalu for 2016 have been:

*Feeling supported and comfortable, learning together, learning new things together, working together… sharing ideas, feeling free to share, planning together, Yolŋu teaching.*

Although the development of these skills is a lifelong process, and in the organisational setting there are numerous other contributors that play a role, it was reported that WCE’s support in this area was highly valued.

**Community vision**

The community of Galiwinku would like to see an increased number of students being able to graduate with a university degree. Improved participation of parents in the school would support this. The community would like to see more English literacy and academic writing courses being offered as well as professional development programs for Yolŋu teachers. Here follows some statements from some of the parents who were interviewed:
I want to see my children finish school and go to university. Too many kids go from school directly to Centrelink. I want to see a better future for all children in this community.

When I finished school, many years ago, I could write and speak English, no problems. I do not use English anymore, as I live and work here. But I don’t see the kids here speaking and writing English. I think the school needs to offer more support and better classes. I don’t know if my children will be ready to start university because of this.

We need to see stronger Yolŋu teachers here. We need more Yolŋu in the classroom, but they need support, they also need to complete their diplomas.

The provision of business and counselling courses have also been mentioned as crucial for the community, where the first could enable a higher number of local people setting up their own businesses, and the latter would provide the training required to support the unfortunate increasing number of depression and suicide cases within the community. The following are comments made by two local community members:

There are many people talking about starting a business here, from our people and to our own people, but where do we learn the skills? We cannot be away from family; we need courses here and more easily available to our people.

When kids are depressed they do not have a person to help them. We need counsellors to support them and our families here. At night we have these kids wandering around; maybe they cannot see a different future for them.

According to the data collected during the research interviews, it is clear that the local community would like to see improved school attendance, a clearer pathway from education to employment, Yolŋu pedagogy in all areas and levels of education as well as an improved number of Yolŋu teachers moving from being assistants to fully qualified teachers.

The School System

To have any impact on the education pathways of remote Indigenous community members, the individual must be seen within an education ‘system’. In part due to the delay in establishing Yalu’s WCE programs, a targeted approach was taken in working with the school. In this case the Galiwin’ku school system was the focus. Within the school setting, Yalu Marŋgithinyaraw worked on a number of different strategies targeted at different elements of the school system. These included cultural competence of staff, confidence and knowledge of educational pathways for students, Yolŋu teachers’ career pathways, leadership and cultural awareness workshops, as described in this report. Yalu also works in collaboration with Shepherdson College through other programs, such as students’ social and emotional wellbeing, Learning on Country and workshop activities to support young parents.

According to Rosemary Gundjarranbuy, Yalu is now working more closely with the school leadership team, who are holding meetings with Yalu staff to discuss progress of activities and plan future ones together. Gundjarranbuy claims that because of the constant change in school management which saw nine principals in two years, in the recent past, this was not possible. It was therefore difficult, until later in 2015, to have closer and continuous contact with the Principal and Deputy Principal. With a more stable
school leadership system, Yalu staff have received a lot of support and the school has been receptive of new ideas for activities, especially because some benefits for the students and teaching staff are beginning to show. It is expected that their collaborative work will continue, hopefully progressing the work that they have so far developed and delivered together.

Key challenges and outcomes

During the initial phase of this initiative, the most challenging aspect was the negotiation between what community-based staff envisaged for the activities and what WCE expected in relation to the SLA. After a certain amount of time, things were not progressing. According to Yalu staff, and in discussions with WCE staff, an approach where they could always follow their own ways of working, be flexible and make changes as the work progressed was a more suitable approach. An ‘emergent’ rather than a ‘structured’ approach was most appropriate.

Another challenge faced was the timeframe of the initiative. WCE deadlines did not always meet with the ones determined by the community. It was also important not to create high expectations of whom to meet and which activities to be invited to participate in, during field visits. The best approach was to make sure that visiting dates had been agreed with Rosemary Gundjarranbuy (Yalu Manager). This is because Yalu staff have a range of other programs being run and management gets very busy with other stakeholders visiting and requesting meetings at the same time.

Yalu’s work in mentoring, and cultural awareness and bilingual literacy sessions as part of Learning Together has contributed to some benefits for the school environment. This is, of course, within the context of several other factors already mentioned such as more stable school staff and re-establishment of the highly valued Learning on Country program. External factors, such as extreme weather (for example Cyclone Lam) and regular funerals in community continue to significantly influence community life. Despite this, some of the positive things that have been reported by staff at the school and Yalu include:

- Improving engagement of Yolŋu Assistant Teachers
- Increased interest in Yolŋu culture and the role of Yolŋu staff in the school by Balanda staff (Balanda and Yolŋu)
- Strong engagement of misbehaving children during mentoring sessions
- Increased confidence of Yalu staff in independently planning and documenting their work
- Yolŋu teachers began to demonstrate more confidence and willingness to complete their studies as assistant teachers (Diploma and Bachelor Degree)

It is important to highlight the significance of some of the small influences that some of the activities described in this report, in particular the cultural awareness training, had. Remote NT communities are highly complex settings. While acknowledging the strength and diversity of people, communities, environments and histories of remote Indigenous communities, as highlighted in this report there are also many challenges that remote communities students and learners face to educational progression. Staff turnover is often high in remote NT community schools, and language and culture barriers are huge. Beginning to building the understanding about Yolngu kinship system and language of non-Indigenous teachers and strengthening their relationship with Indigenous Assistant Teachers, families and the local community is a crucial part of making education journeys of students more meaningful and more accessible. Culturally appropriate student mentoring is just as important, however, the program that was established through WCE requires some tweaks to make it work better for both Yalu and the school.
It is important to highlight that change in complex settings is slow. The majority of the actions described in this report commenced only in mid-2016 due to a combination of factors that delayed progress in the project. Implementation challenges aside, the timeframe of the WCE initiative was a near-impossible barrier that we faced to achieving sustainability in our work. It should be acknowledged that short term funding is not an effective model for initiatives that focus on community development and empowerment. This project has laid some foundations for what could be continued into the future to support the education pathways of school students in this community, however, further funding is needed if they are to continue.

Recommendations

Based on the evaluation of Galiwinku WCE project, the following points are recommended by WCE and Yalu management:

- Interviews should always be conducted by local researchers in the traditional Yolŋu way.
- Learning Together and cultural awareness sessions should be continued within Shepherdson College as they have proved valuable in supporting the work the team teachers have started this year by sharing ideas and developing new ways of working together in the classroom.
- Work opportunities for local community people should continue to be advertised within the community. It should only go externally when/if a professional is not found or available within the community.
- Mentoring in school is crucial to support reading and writing Yolŋu Matha language skills and English, as well as participation in cultural activities (strengthening Indigenous language, identity and culture). These were identified by Yalu staff to be of extreme importance in increasing student engagement, motivation, respect and building students’ confidence. There is a need to engage and empower students for higher attendance – cultural activities need to be continuously supported in and out of school.
- There is a need for more Yolŋu teachers to acquire full degrees.
- Continued support is required for building the leadership of Yolŋu teachers.
- English LLN is fundamental to the educational advancement of remote communities.

These recommendations reflect what has been learned during the WCE initiative. It is a direct representation of the Galiwin’ku community educational perspectives and their views on what is required to continue with their work on strengthening pathways into higher education for their community.

Future directions

Yalu Marŋgithinyaraw is already planning and finding ways to be able to continue the services that they are currently providing in collaboration with Shepherdson College, such as mentoring of students and Yolŋu teachers as well as the cultural awareness training. Yalu is committed to continuing these activities and they will be open for discussions relating to future funding opportunities. Multiple grant applications were developed in partnership with Yalu in the latter half of 2016 to extend this work. They are also in discussions with CDU and other stakeholders about English LLN courses, to be delivered in Galiwinku in 2017. The visit of CDU staff to Yalu who performed LLN assessments, as part of a pilot program, was a
preliminary step towards having LLN courses delivered in the community in 2017, and beyond the WCE initiative.

Yalu is also considering the option of having counselling skills training for the mentors, administration courses and business training for locals, following current discussions on community needs. The main difficulty that the community has faced is the lack of accommodation options for people who need to travel to the community to deliver training and other services. Yalu is considering their options on buying a new or second-hand demountable to be upgraded and made available for visitors/workers who need to stay in Galiwin'ku to deliver their services. WCE has supported multiple grant submissions to extend projects that WCE supported the establishment for, in efforts to provide ongoing assistance to the operations of Yalu in responding to community priorities.

Yalu’s work has been crucial to the advancement of the broader community, as the WCE activities, delivered by them, have focused on strengthening education, local languages, culture and leadership. They have supported the creation of nurturing relationships between the school and the wider community. By working alongside Shepherdson College, Yalu has supported the creation of an inclusive environment for students and teachers. This approach leads to a positive learning culture that not only improves the educational outcomes for all students, but it also enhances their mental health, emotional and social wellbeing.

A metaphor describing the collaboration between WCE and Yalu

Gundjarranbuy and Lawurrpa use a Yolŋu metaphor to describe the collaborative work between WCE and the Galiwin’ku community during this initiative. It describes relationships and collaboration. It shows how they have evolved to bring positive outcomes for the community. It is here in their own words:

Water comes running down the land to meet sea water. The water is really murky, carrying with it broken branches, dead leaves and lots of debris. The meeting of waters is turbulent and there is a lot of disruption. But suddenly, the waters start to mix and clear water emerges. They mix harmoniously. The disruption is suddenly gone. The sea is calm and peaceful again.

This metaphor clearly describes that it has been a long journey for us all. Through the challenges we all discovered that open discussions only lead to closer working relationships, based on trust and respect. We hope that as a result of the WCE activities presented in this report, the team teachers continue on their journey, stronger than ever before, and that students are able to attain at higher levels of education.

Resources

The two videos showcasing these activities, which were made by community members are available on the WCE website for viewing. See:

References


Guenther, J 2015, ‘How can academia contribute to participatory methodologies for community engagement in the diverse cultural contexts of remote Australia?’, http://www.covaluator.net/docs/S1.4_academia_participatory_evaluations.pdf


Whole of Community Engagement Initiative

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