



# Gäwa news Edition Four 2014

## Why have Cultural Exchange?

Being such a small, remote school it was important to carefully consider the merits and impact of a Cultural Exchange Program. It needed to be more than just an exotic holiday for a handful of students from interstate. It would have a significant impact on our students, our teachers, our community and our resources. We aimed to challenge the norms of cultural identity and alter perceptions of life in other cultural communities. We hoped to build meaningful relationships in a short space of time that crossed cultural boundaries. We wanted to celebrate the unity that we share in our common faith.

There was great anticipation amongst our community as we prepared for the arrival of our guests. As we planned together, we considered how we could create an understanding of Yolŋu culture and language that went beyond the surface. We hoped our kids would receive our guests graciously and welcome them into their own cultural space. We hoped our visitors would be sensitive guests in a culture so different to their own. Having just concluded our second visit from Illawarra Christian School, we have been blessed beyond our imaginings. Beautiful relationships were formed. The seed of a deep and engaging respect for Yolŋu culture was planted and has begun to blossom amongst the visiting ICS team. We laughed together, sang together, danced together and prayed together during our time.

Our community contributed with great enthusiasm across the whole week, excited by the keenness of our visitors to understand Indigenous language and culture. We give thanks to our great God as we share the story of our week with you. May you be encouraged as you look through this small window into the week that was.

Karen Fletcher

Read more about our Cultural Exchange week at [bothwayslearning.wordpress.com](http://bothwayslearning.wordpress.com)



Cultural Exchange group from Illawarra Christian School



Painting flags for our 'Tour de Gäwa'



### Gurrutu (Relationship)



“ This week I have enjoyed being part of the Yolŋu family in Gäwa. Being called *Yapa* (sister) and the process of adoption, has made me form life long connections with the kids. This has been a significant part of my trip.

Lauren with her 'yapa', Dhanguryun





Each morning our Gäwa kids awoke early and headed straight for school. They eagerly awaited the emergence of our visitors from their accommodation and the exciting possibilities of a new day. When the Ban'thula kids arrived, we began each day with activities in each classroom and then met together for singing and devotions. Our students taught our visitors songs in Yolŋu language and Sue, with the help of her puppet friend Millie, shared some parables from the Bible.

## Language & Culture Lessons

Each day we learnt something new about Yolŋu language and culture. We taught our visitors about

the different sounds in Djambarrpuyŋu language, commonly used words and phrases and relationship terms. Kids and adults from the community gave us some insight into another language communicated without words— Yolŋu sign language. We also discussed the importance of story telling and passing on knowledge through art, song and dance. We listened to special songs and learnt traditional dances for many saltwater animals.



Picnic at Muramura...

We enjoyed a day at one of our favourite beaches on the island. When we first arrived Banthay, elder of the Ban'thula Homeland, shared with us the traditional story of Muramura. We learnt how all places and people are connected and hold a special place in a bigger story. Family connections and friendships were deepened as we all enjoyed various activities at the beach— swimming, fishing and hunting for mudcrabs and mangrove worms.

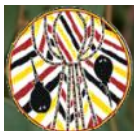


Boys performing bāru (crocodile) dance



“I loved the fact that I felt loved...we could tell that they genuinely wanted us to be there. This week, I've learnt more about community than I ever could have at home. I've seen the way that God intended us to be; one big family under Him.” Grace

“Everyone made us feel welcomed and special. The kids, staff and the whole community showed thoughtfulness and brotherly love to us. The place was beautiful and wild. I loved seeing the living off the land that can be done there. Also awesome to hear Jesus acknowledged as 'No.1' in a place so different and far away.” Bruce





**Arts and Crafts...** Students and teachers from ICS had the opportunity to learn a few traditional handicrafts in our week together. Sal taught us how to draw different Yolŋu animals and everyone created beautiful artworks with traditional designs and patterns. For two afternoons the girls and boys went



their separate ways— the boys made their own spears and the girls made rock pendants and shell jewellery. As in any culture, art and crafts is always a great way to share skills and knowledge in a relaxed atmosphere.



### Bungul

After learning about the importance of story telling, dance and song the entire community joined together for a 'bungul' (traditional dance) and we all had the chance to practice the animal dances we had learnt earlier in the week.



### Farewell Community Dinner

On our last evening together we shared a meal together as a community. Clive told us a traditional story of the saltwater and freshwater meeting together and explained the way this story demonstrates the way that two groups can meet and choose to work together, despite their differences. Then everyone joined in for a night of dancing together. We concluded our night by joining in a tight circle, representing waters, people and places meeting together in one place. A beautiful way to end our special week together!

"During our first few days in Darwin, we chatted about what it might be like in Gäwa. We thought it would be beautiful and warm and that we might see different animals. We knew we would hear a different language and experience a different culture. ....nothing prepared us for just how amazing our experience would be. From the moment we stepped out of the troopy in Gäwa we were embraced by a warm and loving community. We felt safe, accepted and loved. Through conversations, song, stories and dance we were taught a tiny bit of Yolŋu culture and language. Together we praised God for the beauty of creation and for His unfailing love. The week has changed each of us, for some it is a new appreciation of family and relationships, for others it is wonder at how God has made us all 'same but different'. Thankyou to the elders and the community of Gäwa for allowing us to come and spend a week with you all. It was a week we will never forget."

Penny (pictured with Dhunalwariwuy)

