

OCHRE Evaluation Stage 1: Gumbaynggir Language and Culture Nest (summary report)

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The Continuing Conversation

Evaluation | Stage 1: Implementation and early outcomes

Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest

Stage 1 Summary Report

Prepared for the Aboriginal Communities of Coffs Harbour, Grafton and Nambucca NSW.

June 2018

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This report belongs to Aboriginal Communities of Coffs Harbour, Grafton and Nambucca.

The Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest operates on Gumbaynggirr Country.

The evaluation team from the Social Policy Research Centre acknowledges the Gumbaynggirr peoples as the traditional custodians of the land we work on and pay our respect to Elders past, present and future and all Aboriginal peoples of the region.

Acknowledgement

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The *OCHRE* Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest: What we have found

<p>What is working?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest (the Nest) is positive for young people and for the community involved in it. Learning Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture is important. • Students enjoy classes and (most) wanted more time to learn. They like to talk to their families about what they had learned, and learning Language supported their connection with Aboriginal culture and community. • Tutors and teachers are committed to teaching Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture. [Some tutors are working for free so students don't miss out.] <p>Important messages to NSW Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture is being revitalised and more people are coming to speak Language. 	<p>What needs further work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members would like input into how the Nest classes work, including who teaches them and how students are taught. • Aboriginal Language and Culture classes should be based on Aboriginal ways of learning and teaching – focus on speaking Gumbaynggirr and not writing. • Language learning resources should be accessible to all members of Aboriginal communities in the region. • The Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest program is not being taken up by every government school –this means that many Aboriginal students do not have an opportunity to learn Gumbaynggirr Language. • Addressing the cultural acceptability of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest sitting in the school environment. • The Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest program is under-resourced. Needs resources and funds to support staff, training and job security – this includes teachers training within the community and ongoing Language skills development. • Opportunities to learn Gumbaynggirr Language should be prioritised for young Aboriginal people and available for all students. • Schools and communities need information and support during the implementation of the Nest, including improved communication about how the Nest operates, and how it is structured. <p>Important messages to NSW Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for improved consultation with local Aboriginal Communities and stakeholders during implementation. • More resources are needed to ensure access to the Nest across the region. • It is challenging for the Nest to provide community-wide access when it is based within a government school. • Better mechanisms need to be developed to accommodate Elders to be part of the Nest?
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Summary of the *Continuing Conversation*

Researchers find out about OCHRE's history

Gumbaynggirr Language Nest agreed to continue the *UCHRE* conversation in Coffs, Nambucca and Grafton (May and June 2016)

Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council checked the conversations will happen respectfully (9 August 2016)

The Coffs, Nambucca and Grafton communities each met with researchers to decide how and when conversations would take place - co-design. (16-17 February 2017)

Michael Barnes had conversations in Communities between 16-21 October 2017. Six Community Researchers had conversations until mid November 2017. Other conversations took place by telephone in Feb 2018.

Community helps researchers to understand the information collected (5-6 April 2018).

Community decides what happens with findings. Phase 2 of the evaluation begins July 2018.

The *OCHRE* Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest

The *OCHRE* Evaluation adopts the approach of ‘continuing conversations’. Over the past two years, SPRC evaluators have continued the conversations with members of Aboriginal communities about the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest – part of *OCHRE*. The evaluation team have used culturally acceptable methods as much as possible and facilitated community-control of the research.

Community-controlled research involves co-design – this is a way of conducting research *with* and *not on* communities. The evaluation team asked communities how they would like information collected, what they think would be a measure of the program’s success, who the team should talk to, and what is the best approach to contact people to be a part of the evaluation. We trained local community members to be researchers to have conversations. As part of co-design we also returned a draft report to research participants in communities and asked for their feedback, (validation of findings) which has been added to this final report.

This is a summary of what we were told and what we heard about *OCHRE* and the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest.

The final report has been presented to and accepted by nominated members of the Aboriginal communities involved in the evaluation in Coffs Harbour, Grafton and Nambucca.

The evaluation team will draw lessons from all *OCHRE* sites being evaluated and present a Synthesis Report to the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Regional Alliances (NCARA).

What people told us about the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest

Wherever our kids are learning Language is a good thing ... And any opportunity is an advantage to students.

I wish I had the chance to learn a lot more in school as I would love to teach my kids when I have them. As so many of our young generation learning about their culture and language would give them self-pride.

It is important to know your tribe and where we stand in our Country. If we forget about Aboriginal heritage we would not know who we are. It's the way we are.

Findings

- There is widespread support for Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture in the community.
- The impact of history and government bans on Aboriginal Languages shapes how Aboriginal community members feel about the teaching and learning of Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture.
- There is some disagreement in the communities about how the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest was developed and is delivered. However, there appears to be no single best way for Aboriginal Languages and Cultures to be taught and one program is unlikely to meet everyone's needs.
- Community members have mixed views about how, who and where Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture should be taught and how the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest should work – in particular, who owns Gumbaynggirr Language, who has cultural authority to teach it, and who can learn it in the first instance.
- Aboriginal Language and Culture classes should be based on Aboriginal ways of learning and teaching – for example, learning should focus on speaking Gumbaynggirr and not just writing.
- Prior to the Nest, there were already functioning, but under-resourced, Aboriginal organisations conducting Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture classes, and training. The State Government could provide more resources and proper funding to these organisations (Muurrbay and other Aboriginal organisations, including Yarrawarra Cultural Centre).

What is working well?

I like learning about my Culture and Language, so I can teach my other family members.

It is important... to learn about our culture and understand where we come from. And to also keeps our culture alive and to ensure our Culture and Language isn't forgotten.

Yes. It's good because most parents have not had the opportunity to teach their kids about language and culture. Knowing that the kids are learning about themselves and where they have come from might help them understand what it is to be a first Australian.

Learning Language ... builds identity and confidence in ways that I have never seen before.

Findings

- Learning Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture is positive for young people and for the community and the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest is positive for young people and for the community involved in it.
- Some community members, parents and all students supported teaching Language and Culture in schools.
- Students learning Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture said they enjoy classes and (most) wanted more time to learn.
- Students like to talk to their families about what they had learned, and learning Language supported their connection with Aboriginal culture and community.

Implementation of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest

Overall a fantastic initiative – that took a while to get off the ground.

For me, you know, I think Gumbaynggirr people should learn it first and it should be only taught first, you know, and then it goes onto the next lot of people, because it was taken away from us. It was taken away from our Elders to pass onto us and it belongs to them and us. So, we should learn it first. It's a shame when you walk into a shop or something and a white fella talks in your language.

Teaching in schools relies on having the Principal's agreement to participate in the Nest, meeting the Department of Education's conditions of employment, and follows a white way of teaching. There should be ways of ensuring that schools involve the community in the teaching of Aboriginal Languages and Cultures in an appropriate way.

Findings

- Implementation of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest should begin with developing relationships and learning from existing programs that teach Aboriginal Languages and Culture run by Aboriginal organisations.
- Most participants agreed that the Gumbaynggirr peoples should have input and community-control into the design and management of the Nest.
- Community members would like input into how the Nest classes work, including who teaches them and how students are taught. The Nest implementation could be more respectful to Gumbaynggirr Elders.

Challenges

- Demand for classes exceeds supply of Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture teachers, tutors and Nest resources.
- Implementation relies on government school Principal's support.

What are the challenges and how can the Nest be improved?

We heard about the challenges the Nest

All Language and Culture programs should be led and facilitated by Aboriginal corporations at all times. This would ensure that Language learning is linked to Country and community which therefore ensures authenticity free from Eurocentric viewpoints/perspectives of our Language and Culture.

It's not really a whole of community initiative if you're only targeting half the audience

I don't see us truly controlling our language when the Department [of Education] still dictates how we work. When it's sitting there, and we've got to tick the department's boxes off. 'Oh - we've done this in the curriculum, we got the kids to create these new words'.

Findings

- Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest sits in the government school environment, where they are subject to the rules of the education system and decisions by the Principal. The program is not being taken up by every government school – this means that many students within the Gumbaynggirr language footprint do not have an opportunity to learn Gumbaynggirr Language.
- The NSW Department of Education's policy for employment of tutors, requiring Cert III qualifications, makes it difficult to find teachers and prevents some Aboriginal Gumbaynggirr Elders from participating in the Nest.
- Muurrbay [Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-operative] as a major resource for providing language and culture support, education and training.
- The tutors themselves do not have secure employment and have limited resources for essential activities for teaching, including travel to schools, developing skills and accessing appropriate materials.

We heard about how to improve the Nest

...community-based learning and if they have the opportunity to access the Nest, if they have the means to learn their own language, they may only have access in their own area. You gotta think about Elders, and transport issues, they should be given the opportunity to tap into the LCN [Nest].

I think any way our children can learn Language and Culture is great. More qualified Gumbaynggirr tutors would be a great asset and doing some traditional on Country teaching would be great with more community input, Elders coming into schools as well.

Yes, I think it's good for all children to learn in schools, but older people need access and the community. So, everyone can talk to each other in Gumbaynggirr.

Well, again in the school only certain age groups are taught it [Gumbaynggirr Language] and then they don't teach it the old way where we sit down and talk, they made it all white.

Findings

- Secure and stable long-term funding and adequate resources to ensure all students have the opportunity to learn Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture. There also needs to be wider community access to Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture learning resources.
- Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest should be Aboriginal community-controlled and less constrained by government processes.
- NSW Government should provide resources to community organisations to support existing Language and Culture programs and develop them more.

For Students

- There needs to be an increased number of classes - one class a week is not enough to learn a language.
- Opportunities to learn Gumbaynggirr Language should be prioritised for young Aboriginal people and available for all students.

For Staff

- Nest staff need support, training and job security – this includes teacher training within the community and support for ongoing Language development. This will develop tutors' skills and increase the number of Gumbaynggirr Language tutors and teachers.

For Aboriginal communities, schools and stakeholders

- There also needs to be wider community access to Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture learning resources.
- There needs to be improved communication between schools and teachers with Nest teachers and tutors.
- Improved communication about how the Nest operates, including the structure of the Nest. Community members need to know more about the Nest and what is happening to ensure they can be a part of the process.

Community views of success for the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest

We heard about success for the Nest

Having pride within themselves as they have known where they came from.

Many non-Aboriginal people are also getting involved in Gumbaynggirr Language learning and this is big for building mutual understandings.

Show a real sense of pride in their Gumbaynggirr classes – when you do language, they often know some of it already and they spark and lighten up when they hear it in the classroom.

Some indicators at our school that Aboriginal students are more comfortable speaking in language in assembly.

Findings – success for the Nest

- More Local Aboriginal people are speaking Gumbaynggirr Language.
- Members of Aboriginal communities have access to Gumbaynggirr Language classes.
- Young Aboriginal people have access to Language and Culture, including learning 'on Country'.
- People with cultural authority, (Elders, Aboriginal people with cultural knowledge who are accepted by communities) are teaching Gumbaynggirr Language and have job security.
- Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest is community-controlled, properly funded and resourced.

Recommendations to NSW Government

The following recommendations for the **NSW Government** are based on what we heard was working well and what could be improved.

Themes	Recommendations
Implementation of the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest (the Nest)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation should begin with developing relationships and learning from existing programs that teach Aboriginal Languages and Culture run by Aboriginal organisations. • Aboriginal organisations should be funded to do Language and Culture work in the community and then go into schools. • Schools and communities need information and support during the implementation of the Nest, including improved communications about how the Nest will operate and the governance structure of the Nest. • Ensure staff consistency during the implementation stage. • Policy decision-makers (in the Department of Education and Aboriginal Affairs NSW) come together to prioritise and support teaching Aboriginal Languages and Cultures in schools – and not rely on local Aboriginal peoples to fight for inclusion. • Aboriginal Community members and school stakeholders would like more information about the Nest, how it is organised, how decisions are made and how the Nest operates in schools, including opportunities for ongoing communication with and input from members of Aboriginal communities.

Themes	Recommendations
Aboriginal cultural conflicts with the appropriateness of locating a Nest in NSW School environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include mechanisms to ensure that Gumbaynggirr peoples and community members should have more input into the design and management of the Nest. • Aboriginal Language and Culture classes should be based on Aboriginal traditional ways of teaching and learning, learning should focus on oral, not a written language. • Build cultural respect and cultural acceptability of Nest programs through greater inclusion of Gumbaynggirr Elders into content and teaching.
NSW Government support for existing Aboriginal organisations to provide activities and content for the Nest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Government to provide more resources and funding to existing Aboriginal organisations that include Muurrbay and Yarrawarra Cultural Centre.
Access to the Nest is not available for all Aboriginal people in the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to learn Gumbaynggirr language should be prioritised for young Aboriginal peoples in the region. • The broader Gumbaynggirr community should be able to access resources and classes provided. Classes should be available across all schools and all years, not only for some children in some government schools. • There need to be improved pathways for members of Aboriginal communities to learn Language and Culture and continue to build knowledge.
More Aboriginal community input into Nest programs and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gumbaynggirr communities would like more input into the classes including ensuring Aboriginal methods of learning and teaching are the priority and that Gumbaynggirr

Themes	Recommendations
	<p>teachers should be approved by Gumbaynggirr communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reference group could include more community members, including those from different organisations and hold their meetings across the Nest region.
Adequate and sustainable resourcing of the Nest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nest is currently under-resourced and needs an increased budget so that schools do not have to use their funding to ensure Nest classes operate. The Nest needs to be better resourced and funded including staff support, training and job security. This includes teacher training WITHIN the community and support for ongoing Gumbaynggirr language development. More learning and teaching resources, training and support for Gumbaynggirr teachers – including support for Gumbaynggirr Elders to be allowed into schools to teach. Schools need to be able to access other Gumbaynggirr Tutors to ensure Gumbaynggirr Language classes have stability. Ideally Tutors would be on continuing contracts rather than being casual employees.
Number of Language classes available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There needs to be an increased number of classes offered. The current class once a week is not enough to learn language. Schools should be resourced to receive more than 3 hours of Aboriginal Language teaching each week. Aboriginal Language teaching should be part of the core curriculum not an added extra.

Themes	Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture should be part of the pre-school curriculum.
Education and training of Nest Language Teachers and Tutors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There needs to be supported professional education and training to develop tutors and to increase the number of Gumbaynggirr language teachers. Increased funding and support for developing Gumbaynggirr Language teachers' knowledge and capacity, including professional development. Nest Tutors and Aboriginal Education Officers (AEOs) should have a resource kit to work from. Nest Tutors should be encouraged to share their resources, experiences, and have access to peer support.
Need for improved communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the communications between teachers, tutors and schools
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify the governance structures, decision making processes and accountability mechanisms, and processes of the Nest including the roles of the Steering Group, NSW Department of Education, NSW AECG Inc. and Aboriginal Affairs NSW. There needs to be a program protocol which sets out in detail the structures and processes for governing the Nest.

Directions for next conversations

There are two more stages to the *OCHRE* Evaluation:

- Stage 2, from July 2018 to June 2021 aims to identify changes experienced by communities, outcomes and make recommendations for improving the initiatives.
- Stage 3, from July 2021 to June 2024 aims to assess the contribution the initiative has made in meeting long-term goals and make recommendations for improving the initiative.

Based on the conversations to date (including co-design), we propose the next conversations include and discuss **continuity of Gumbaynggirr Language classes over time** (for example, looking at data about participation) and Aboriginal **community roles and access to the Nest**. Data is currently being collected by the Department of Education and the next stage of the evaluation will include analysis of this information.

