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The Continuing Conversation

Evaluation | Stage 1:
Implementation and early outcomes

North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest

Stage 1 Summary Report

Prepared for participating Aboriginal Communities and members of the
North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest Reference Group

June 2018

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This report belongs to Aboriginal Communities of Dubbo, Narromine, Gilgandra, Peak Hill, Trangie, Wellington and Mudgee, and the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest Reference Group.

The North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest operates on Wiradjuri Country.

The evaluation team from the Social Policy Research Centre acknowledges the Wiradjuri 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.

Acknowledgements

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Social Policy Research Centre

OCHRE North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest | Stage 1 Evaluation Summary Report | June 2018

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Language was sleeping for a while but its woken up now –
we can see the positive change in the children,
they are proud and accepting they are Aboriginal.

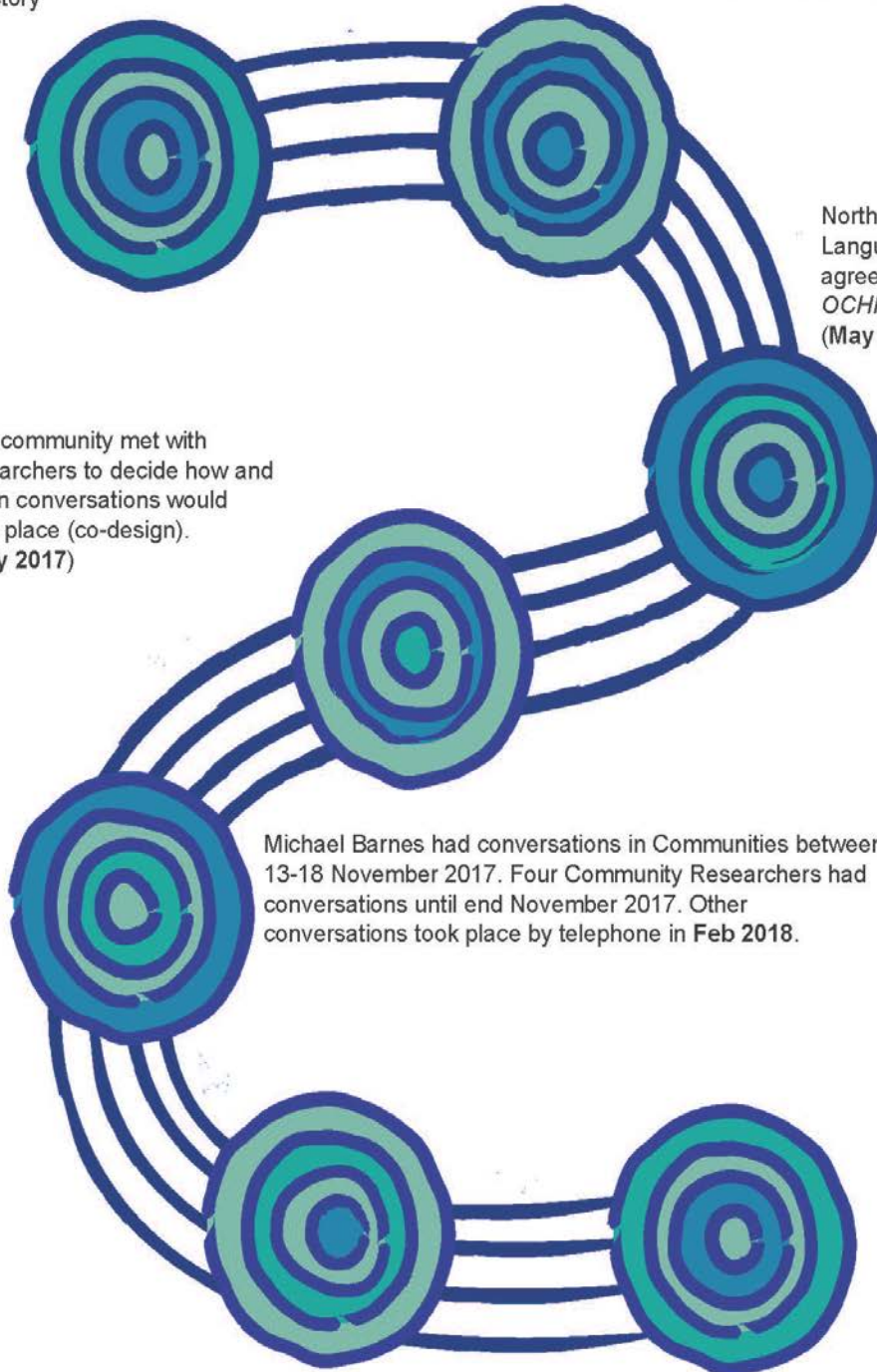
The OCHRE North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest: What we have found

<p>What is working?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest (the Nest) helps build young Aboriginal people’s positive cultural identity, supports young people to develop pride and knowledge in their own culture, builds confidence and belonging through opportunities to learn and practice their language and culture. • Students involved in the Nest said they enjoy classes and wanted to learn more and most students talked to their families about what they had learned. • The Nest provides employment and learning opportunities for tutors and increases tutors’ skills, knowledge and confidence. • The Nest builds and strengthens community – through community members volunteering and their shared commitment to teaching and learning of Wiradjuri Language and Culture. Aboriginal people are sharing knowledge with their communities and Tutors are sharing resources at community meetings. • There are now more people learning an Aboriginal language. • The teaching and learning of Wiradjuri Language and Culture at the Nest increases cultural understandings between non-Indigenous and Aboriginal peoples. • A key strength of the Nest is the support and participation of TAFE teachers. <p>Important messages to NSW Government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The history of colonisation still has impacts on the success and structure of the Nest, and views of who should teach and learn Aboriginal Language and Culture. 	<p>What needs further work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of support from some schools and some members of the community. • There is a lack of resources, including ongoing funding for Aboriginal language teachers and tutors. • There is a need for more resources, information and staff stability from the implementation stage, including improved employment security for Aboriginal Language and Culture tutors and teachers, and secure and ongoing funding for the Nest. • Government policies need to reflect the need to involve Aboriginal communities in decisions about the teaching of Aboriginal language and culture. • There needs more support for the teaching and learning of Wiradjuri Language and Culture across all Government Schools and non-government school sectors, including Juvenile Justice. • It is important to improve Aboriginal cultural safety in schools, including Aboriginal cultural safety training for all school staff. • Increased training, including digital online professional development, and sharing knowledge with other LOTE (language other than English) teachers. <p>Important messages to NSW Government</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Language must be owned by the Lands; no TAFE or schools or government can own it. It is our intellectual property.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance structures for the Nest should be clear and should reflect community ownership of the Nest.
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Summary of the *Continuing Conversation*

Researchers find out about OCHRE's history

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



North-West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest agreed to continue the OCHRE conversation (May 2017)

The community met with researchers to decide how and when conversations would take place (co-design). (July 2017)

Michael Barnes had conversations in Communities between 13-18 November 2017. Four Community Researchers had conversations until end November 2017. Other conversations took place by telephone in Feb 2018.

Community helps researchers to understand the information collected (9 April 2018).

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

The *OCHRE* North West Wiradjuri 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 the North West Wiradjuri 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 evaluation.

This is a summary of what we were told and what we heard. This report has been presented to the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest and members of Aboriginal communities in the region. The report has been updated to incorporate what we heard at both meetings.

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. Representatives of the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest Reference Group have accepted the report.

The evaluation team have drawn lessons from all *OCHRE* sites being evaluated and presented a synthesis report to the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Regional Alliances (NCARA).

What people told us about the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest

Language must be owned by the lands; no TAFE or schools or government can own it. It is our intellectual property.

I see it – it's shifting students' attitudes in that whole identity. It's a very powerful tool for our younger generation and I'm very proud and honoured to say that I'm a part of it – of that revitalisation of the language.

So, what it [the Nest] does is build tolerance, respect, understanding, between black and white Australians, of the differences of culture ... embed that respect and everything around the language, and actually they have a better understanding of who we are as a race of people, and there's a respect there. That will only lead to building a better, bigger nation.

You can't teach language without culture – like any other language, you learn about their culture.

Findings

- There is widespread support for the teaching and learning of Wiradjuri Language and Culture in local Aboriginal communities in the north west Wiradjuri region.
- Students enjoy classes and wanted to learn more.
- Most students talked to their families about what they had learned.
- The teaching and learning of Wiradjuri Language and Culture at the Nest increases cultural understandings between non-Indigenous and Aboriginal peoples.

What is working well?

[The Teacher] has been instrumental in progressing the Language and Culture Nest through writing programs, her good rapport with some Principals before the Nest started, and her support for tutors and teachers through pulling language and cultural resources together to match the Key Learning Areas.

Everything seems to be organised and there has been really good feedback from parents. The school has started a committee in the school to raise profile – now have yarnning circle, and a cultural approach. The funding has been hugely beneficial.

By the end of the year hopefully we've got it from pre-school all the way up to Year 12 programming. If not, we're going to push for more extended time to get that finished. So, it doesn't matter then which class we're going into they'll have full programs with lessons and everything with it.

We all get together and work out and show each other what we have shared to what works and doesn't. Opportunities for me to go into the school to help our kids and for me to have the opportunity to have work and enjoy what I do. ... we all share resources for what works and doesn't and the kids are happy to learn.

Findings

- The North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest (the Nest) helps build young Aboriginal people's positive cultural identity, supports young people to develop pride and knowledge in their own culture, builds confidence, and belonging through opportunities to learn and practice their language and culture.
- Students involved in the Nest said they enjoy classes and wanted to learn more, and most students talked to their families about what they had learned.
- The Nest provides employment and learning opportunities for tutors and increases tutors' skills, knowledge and confidence.
- The Nest builds and strengthens community – through community members volunteering and their shared commitment to teaching and learning of Wiradjuri Language and Culture.
- Aboriginal people are sharing knowledge with their communities and Tutors are sharing resources at community meetings.
- There are now more people learning the Wiradjuri language.
- The teaching and learning of Wiradjuri Language and Culture at the Nest increases cultural understandings between non-Indigenous and Aboriginal peoples.
- A key strength of the Nest is the support and participation of TAFE teachers.

Implementation of the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest

[The Nest] wouldn't be sustainable without the possibility of sharing resources – when we started there was basically nothing.

... it was like ... chucking us in the deep end without resources and skills.

The Nest] has come a long way – good feedback from most Principals, good feedback from parents.

[The Nest] is going great now – more schools getting regular classes – more routine, more skills.

Findings

- During implementation and prior to the establishment of the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest, the Yarradamarra Centre conducted consultations with the Aboriginal communities of the area. This was an important step.
- Stakeholder relationships, including a community-based reference group, tutor training and developing resources are important for implementation and to support the ongoing success of the Nest.

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

Challenges

Some [Tutors] are working 4 days a week at school but are not permanent – no holidays, no travel pay, no wear or tear cover on cars. Where is the value in what the tutors are bringing when they aren't made permanent?

[Some community members] devalue language and culture programs – some support and/or inform Principals with the argument that literacy and numeracy skills is what is needed, and that language and culture programs are unnecessary.

Findings – Challenges

- The history of colonisation still has impacts on the success and structure of the Nest, and views of Aboriginal Language and Culture. In particular there is ongoing debate in the Aboriginal communities about who can teach and learn the Wiradjuri language and how this should be decided.
- There is a lack of support from some schools and some members of the community.
- There is some tension between Government policies that support Aboriginal languages and cultures and autonomy of School Principals through *Local Schools, Local Decisions*.
- There is a lack of resources, including ongoing funding for Aboriginal language teachers and tutors.
- Maintaining the high-standard of teaching, teachers and tutors set for themselves, without crossing community expectations.

Improvements

A website for language tutors to link together and share resources would be great. This resource could be flexible across Nests –a shareable website full of games for language where we can just change the language to the site...so if staff are absent that is another back-up.

In the future, it would be great if more local people could be tutors.

Findings – improvements

- There need to be more resources, information and staff stability from the implementation stage. Including improved employment security for Aboriginal Language and Culture tutors and teachers, and secure and ongoing funding for the Nest.
- The NSW Government legislation and policies that support Aboriginal languages and cultures, such as the *Aboriginal Language Act 2017*, need to be reinforced in schools.
- There needs more support for the teaching and learning of Wiradjuri Language and Culture across all Government Schools and non-government school sectors, including Juvenile Justice.
- It is important to improve Aboriginal cultural safety in schools, including Aboriginal cultural safety training for all school staff.
- There needs to be Increased training, including digital online professional development, and sharing knowledge with Language other than English teachers (LOTE).

Community views of success for the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest

Success is:

...Our community speaking our language.

...Students are speaking and singing at schools and events.

...Wiradjuri people are doing Welcome to Country.

...Students have confidence in learning and speaking Wiradjuri.

...Building pride and connection with their Wiradjuri identity.

...No matter where you went you heard Wiradjuri being spoken.

Findings – success

Participants in the co-design workshop view success of the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest as:

- Wiradjuri Language and Culture is being taught in every school in the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest area.
- The establishment of a locally based Wiradjuri Language and Cultural research centre.
- A Wiradjuri Cultural Keeping Place is established – for learning, resources and repatriation of important cultural objects and other artefacts.
- Expanded resources for the teaching and learning of Wiradjuri Language and Culture are available including ongoing opportunities for tutors to develop resources and share knowledge.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on what we heard was working well and what could be improved.

Recommendations NSW Government

Theme	Recommendations
Sustainability – long-term funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of secure and long-term funding for the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest. • Establish a Wiradjuri Language and Culture Centre in the north west Wiradjuri region in the long-term.
Continuing Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand funding and opportunities for ongoing training, information sharing and resource development for Wiradjuri teachers and tutors. This would include opportunities for coordinators and teachers to access additional funding for mentoring and support for tutors.
Sustainability – employment security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide ongoing funding to ensure employment security for Wiradjuri Language teachers and tutors – not casual employment for 3 hours a week.
Access to Nest programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Principals in the region to include the teaching and learning of Wiradjuri Language and Culture in their schools. • Provide more support for the teaching and learning of Aboriginal language across all Government Schools, including Aboriginal young people in Juvenile Justice custodial institutions, and non-government school sectors.
Community role in decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the complexity of local Aboriginal cultures and provide opportunities for Aboriginal communities' active engagement in decision-making.

Theme	Recommendations
Data provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide data for stakeholders – numbers and stages of children learning an Aboriginal language.
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance structures and processes for the Nest should be clear and should reflect community ownership of the Nest.

Recommendations relevant to Schools/Department of Education

Theme	Recommendations
Inclusion of local Aboriginal language as core curriculum for all students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage local Principals to make local decisions to include the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest as part of their responsibility to NSW Government policies regarding the teaching and learning of Aboriginal languages and cultures. • Include local Aboriginal Languages and Cultures as part of the core curriculum– not as something unique or ‘add on’.
Culturally safe environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a respectful and culturally safe environment for Aboriginal Language and Culture teachers, tutors and students in schools. Ensure all staff, Principals, teachers and general staff receive localised Aboriginal cultural competency and safety training. • Support Aboriginal Language and Culture teachers and tutors within schools and work with classroom teachers to understand the role of Aboriginal Language and Culture teachers and tutors and how the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest program works in Key Learning Areas and across all stages of the curriculum. • Ensure relevant local Aboriginal protocols are identified and followed – who can teach Aboriginal Language and Culture?

Theme	Recommendations
Expansion of Aboriginal Language and Cultural Activities – teaching on Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage participation by broader Aboriginal communities in schools, especially in Aboriginal Language and Cultural activities. • Support ‘on Country’ learning.
Continuing Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide and support continuing professional development, education and training pathways and opportunities for Aboriginal Language and Culture teachers and tutors. • Aboriginal Education Officers to work with Nest staff and develop formal mentoring structures.
Sustainable supply of Aboriginal Language teachers and tutors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an online shared resource and register of available and casual teachers and tutors. This resource could be flexible and used by, and across other Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests.
Government policies included	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government policies supporting the teaching of Aboriginal Language and Culture need to be reflected in local school actions.

Recommendations relevant to NSW AECG Inc.

Theme	Recommendations
Relationship and Communications with NSW AECG Inc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve liaison with NSW AECG Inc. to ensure the diversity in Aboriginal communities are represented – ensure the Nest Reference Group reflects this diverse representation and is not an additional level of governance.
Cultural Keeping Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement a Cultural Keeping Place (fixed location) to support and resource the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest – including digital platforms for sharing resources and the repatriation of important cultural objects and other artefacts.
Relationships to assist in community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and support relationships in the participating communities. Ensure the North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest is providing what communities want.

Theme	Recommendations
determined service and activity provision	

Recommendations relevant to North West Wiradjuri Language and Culture Nest coordinator, teachers and tutors

Theme	Recommendations
Stakeholder relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to build on strong community and school relationships and include all stakeholders in decision making where possible.
Aboriginal Cultural Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to acknowledge the diversity of the region and work with other Aboriginal language groups.
Continuing Professional Development for tutors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tutors to participate in training opportunities to develop digital resources and technology skills. • Tutors to continue to take advantage and participate in any knowledge and information-sharing workshops.
Program Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include more activities and programs.

Directions for next conversations

There are two more stages to the evaluation:

- Stage 2, from July 2018 to June 2021 will identify changes experienced by communities, outcomes and make recommendations for improving the initiatives.
- Stage 3, from July 2021 to June 2024 will 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:

- Tutor training, qualifications and professional development including technology and language teaching skills.
- Development and access to digital resources.
- Community access and inclusion in Nest activities.
- Conversations with more people across the region.
- Collating and collecting participation data – including what data needs to be collected and how the community would like to use this data.
- Conversations about the possibility of a Language and Culture Centre, research centre or permanent Keeping Place for the return of local cultural artefacts.

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