

RESEARCH IMPACT

Revitalisation of Wiradjuri language and culture

A collaboration between the Wiradjuri and Charles Sturt University



Charles Sturt
University



“...spreading of Wiradjuri language ... is driven by the thirst from the people for the return of their language” Dr Uncle Stan Grant Sr AM

Challenge

In the past, the Wiradjuri endured destruction of their way of life, resulting in fractured connections to country and culture. The research backed a community driven initiative for cultural revitalisation in the Wiradjuri nation of central and southern NSW. Research priorities were driven by the needs of Wiradjuri Elders for their community.

Discovery

Dr Bernard Sullivan led research that generated teaching and learning resources which fostered sharing of cultural knowledge. This recovered knowledge was returned to host communities via books, videos & animations, art exhibitions, screenings, and through Charles Sturt University's Graduate Certificate in Wiradjuri Language Heritage and Culture.

Impact

This research was instrumental in supporting the popularisation of Wiradjuri language through widespread sharing of language animations. It created unprecedented access to cultural concepts and successfully supported the realisation of host community goals for cultural revitalisation.

This research backed a community driven initiative for cultural revitalisation in the Wiradjuri nation of central and southern NSW. Research priorities were driven by the Wiradjuri Elders needs for their community. Through discussion over a number of years it emerged that these needs encompassed the inter-generational renewal of cultural values, including way of life, ways of working together and concepts embedded in language.

A question emerged during the research that was answered universally by all participants.

“What is the most important thing?”

“Yindyamarra” (a way of life built on respect).

Yindyamarra became the essence of the methodology and central to the creative works created during the research. This led to the film, ‘Yindyamarra Yambuwan’ which in turn, when viewed by the participants and their communities, prompted a new range of contributions to the theme.

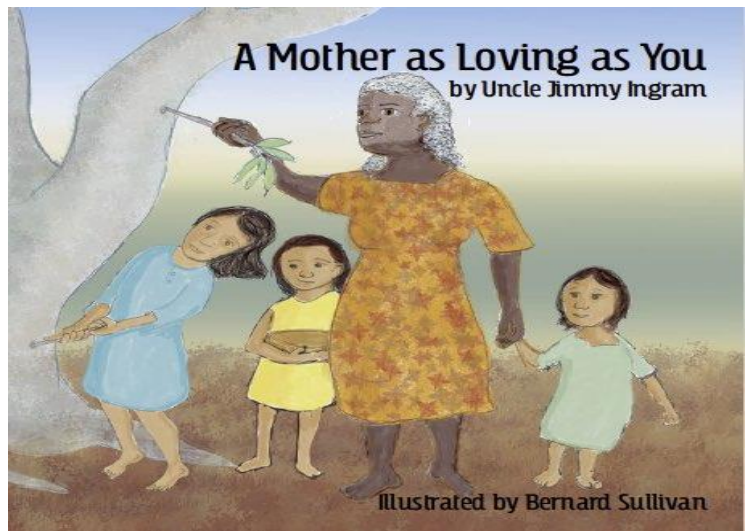
The research generated teaching and learning resources that foster the sharing of cultural knowledge. This recovered knowledge was returned to host communities via books, videos & animations, public art exhibitions, launches and screenings, and provided resources for the new Graduate Certificate in Wiradjuri Language Heritage and Culture offered by Charles Sturt University.

In 2015, the first students graduated from the Graduate Certificate in Wiradjuri Language Heritage and Culture. These graduates were primarily Wiradjuri community members and Elders. This course was developed in response to the growing demand for Wiradjuri cultural knowledge that this research supported. Supporting the key Wiradjuri language teacher, Dr Uncle Stan Grant Sr.'s, needs for this course, four animated Wiradjuri songs for learning language were created and released. 700 DVDs of the songs were distributed throughout south-eastern Australia in addition to release on YouTube and Vimeo where they have received over 8,000 views. The song animations were also screened at the Australian Animation Festival in 2014. From this outreach, the songs were adopted by Wiradjuri Language teachers, schools and preschools across south-eastern Australia. The language resources created as part of the investigative processes, and the subsequent creative works, are resource kits and tools that are available for learning Wiradjuri language.

Recovering lost knowledge

The research also led to creation of texts with significant cultural content. For example, the book *'Menindee Girl, The Story of my Life'* tells the life story of a prominent Ngiyaampa Elder Aunty Joyce Hampton. This book helped to restore connections among a vast kinship network throughout Western NSW. Cultural knowledge held by families and individuals has traditionally been passed on from Elders to their children and grandchildren. This research has supported the respectful inter-generational transfer of knowledge, supporting traditional ways in a modern textual format.

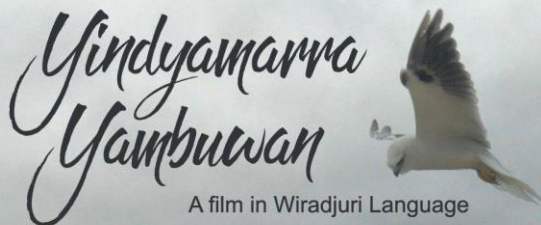
Wider regional community access to the films, books, exhibitions, presentations and conversations surrounding the research provided opportunities to share cultural values and experiences, which fostered reconciliation and mutual understanding.



"This research respectfully supported cultural revitalisation, leaving a practical legacy of use and benefit to the host communities." Dr Bernard Sullivan

Community engagement

Engagement was driven through word of mouth introductions and referrals in Aboriginal community networks, formal and informal presentations and discussions with Elders and community members, distribution to Elders of the film *'Yindyamarra Yambuwan'*, multiple book copies to family members and widely available, public events such as film screenings and book launches, and strategic promotions through social media. The creative works themselves, and the community's engagement with, and demand for, the created works, continues to recover a once-lost culture.



Program Highlights

- Research driven by the Wiradjuri community
- Conducted with senior Wiradjuri Elders, Wiradjuri values such as *'Yindyamarra'* (a way of life based on respect) and required practical outcomes
- A suite of creative works, films, animations, books, exhibitions and screenings, were created and viewed by thousands throughout the community
- The research created a practical legacy of use and benefit to host communities

"In Wiradjuri there are words with deep meaning, bound to Country and to us, that don't exist in English; words that give me self-respect and identity"

Dr Uncle Stan Grant Sr AM
Wiradjuri Elder

More information is available at:

<https://researchoutput.csu.edu.au/en/persons/bernard-sullivan>
<https://www.facebook.com/sharingandlearning1/>
<https://sharingandlearning.com.au/>

Funding and Collaborators

The research developed from Dr Bernard Sullivan's PhD and a subsequent Post-Doctoral Research Fellowship that were supported by Charles Sturt University.

The research was strongly engaged with Wiradjuri Elders and the communities that they represent. Without such engagement the research would not have been possible.

For more information or enquiries email:
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