



## **KAYA WANDJOO NGALA NOONGARPIDIA – WELCOME TO OUR NOONGARPIDIA**

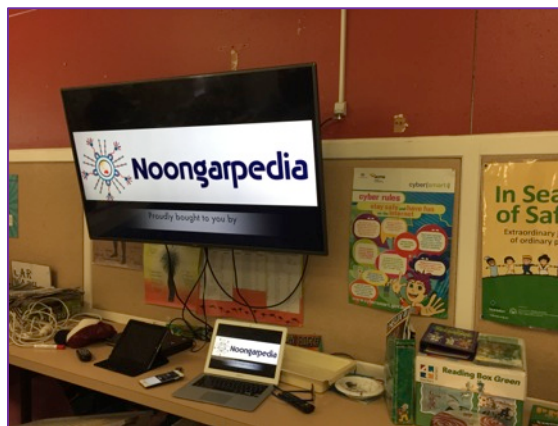
*Report on a research project.*<sup>1</sup>

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### **Chapter 5: Katitjin kulungka mia – Noongarpedia work with schools**

*As in chapter 2, this chapter is written as a conversation (held in December 2016). David Palmer (host), Ingrid Cumming and Jennie Buchanan (both Research Associates of the project), discuss their roles in delivery of workshops for schools in the Noongarpedia project.*



*Dave:* one of the key strategies adopted by the project was to build relationships with targeted primary schools and offer to run sessions that included a mix of Noongar knowledge and Noongarpedia work. So far this has involved doing work in Ashfield

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Research Council Discovery Indigenous project IN140100017 (2014-17): *Noongar kaatdijin bidi – Noongar knowledge networks; or, Why is there no Noongar Wikipedia?*

Primary, Challis Primary, Mullaloo Primary, St Hilda's Primary, Seton College, Hilton Primary, Lockyer Primary in Albany and the Follow the Dream Programme in Albany Senior High School.

Ingrid, can I ask you to start with describing a typical Noongarpedia session in a primary school?

*Ingrid:* Sure, let's talk about a day in the life of Noongarpedia in schools by going to Hilton Primary School (located near the port city of Fremantle, in the southern metropolitan area of Perth, Western Australia). We generally worked with two groups of kids, one after the other.



*Moodjar or WA Christmas Tree. Photo Jennie Buchanan.<sup>2</sup>*

The Noongarpedia team would usually meet at 8 am at a place called the Local Café, around the corner from the school, for a coffee and quick preparation yarn. We would then rock up to the school at 9 am, as the first class of students had morning sport. As they were outside, we would be in the classroom preparing the screen to show the Noongarpedia page and ensure they had iPads to use. The first group would then return and we'd have a session with them until recess. The second session was after

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<sup>2</sup> All photographs in this chapter are by Jennie Buchanan.

recess, where we would see and high five and say kaya to the next group of children, letting them know we were excited to see them.

Hot, sweaty and energised after play time, the students would pour into the room, shouting 'kaya' or hello in Noongar. We would respond with 'yowrl kooliny koorlingah' (come this way), asking them to sit on the mat in front of the white board and screen.

We had a rule that if ever the Noongarpedia facilitator needed their attention, they would raise their hand in the air and shout, 'aliwah' which means 'attention' in Noongar. This was a fun way to get the students to focus and also a wonderful way to get them using Noongar language. We wanted to make the students feel that they were equals in this journey of learning, that they were not empty vessels and that we had the chance to learn from them as much as they were learning from us. We also used humour, cracking jokes and having some fun before we got down to the business of Noongarpedia work.

*Dave:* This sounds to me like a classic Noongar way of approaching learning.

*Ingrid:* Yes, I think that's right. So often Noongar kids find the formal approach to learning really jars them. They are expected to come in to a classroom, sit down quietly and immediately get to work. We would always start the sessions gently, with a bit of fun, humour and with a catch-up. Asking how their week was, if they had put anything more on the 'pedia or had discovered something about the entries they created from the last week or something new over the week.

*Dave:* So, could we say that here you were setting up a kind of knowledge and learning 'sensitivity' that was distinctly Noongar?

*Ingrid:* This has always been important and instrumental in allowing us to do the work.

After this, we would explain to the students what would be the layout of the following session. Important here was that each session was set out in a way that responds to what the students requested, what they wanted to learn from the session ahead. Each session began with what was important to the students: because of what had been happening in their lives, because of what they knew or brought to the knowledge exchange, because of who they knew and because of what they had thought about and investigated since our last Noongarpedia session.

*Dave:* this reminds me of the work of Michael Christie and Yolngu educators such as Wapiriny Gurruwiwi, Joanne Garngulkpuy and Kathy Guthadjaka. In reporting on a project with university students, teaching Yolngu educators on their own country, they make many observations about the importance of Aboriginal ways of learning and



knowledge exchange as well as Aboriginal knowledge content. They conclude that it is impossible to learn about Yolngu knowledge if it is abstracted from Yolngu modes of learning. Critical to them is that learners, in this case students, come into a relationship with each other, with country, and with the social context in which all have been living.

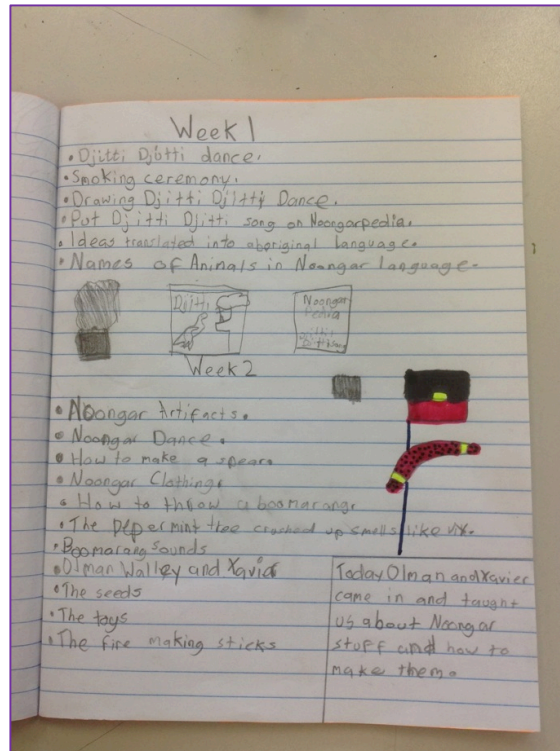
*Ingrid:* Sometimes we invited in a mix of Noongar facilitators and had community involved. The Noongar facilitators started the sessions by introducing Noongar art, dance, songs, stories, tools and other yarns. Later some sessions concentrated purely on how to make entries, focusing on learning the skills required to do that, based on what they already had learnt or learnt with us during the term. However, in the main, we started with various experiences where students got to see, hear and experience culture and knowledge as something alive and being carried out. As much as we could we also gave students a chance to leave the confines of the classroom, walk and connect on country, taking photos and sounds to upload to the Noongarpedia page, or recreating what they learnt by drawing or creating something to add to the Noongarpedia.



*On country*

The experience we shared the students was a great balance of interactivity with We made sure that each session had a mix of screen time and engaging time, time spent in the classroom with time spent outside and on-country. This allowed them to develop a range of skills using ITCs, photography, social and emotional intelligence

and interaction, working in groups, planning, numeracy and literacy, academic skills and cultural practice and protocols. It also gave them a chance to become part of what they were studying, Noongar who are connected to Noongar country and Noongar knowledge.



*Student's Noongarpedia notebook.*





*Noongar cultural facilitator Olman Walley with his nephew Xavier, in workshop with students.*

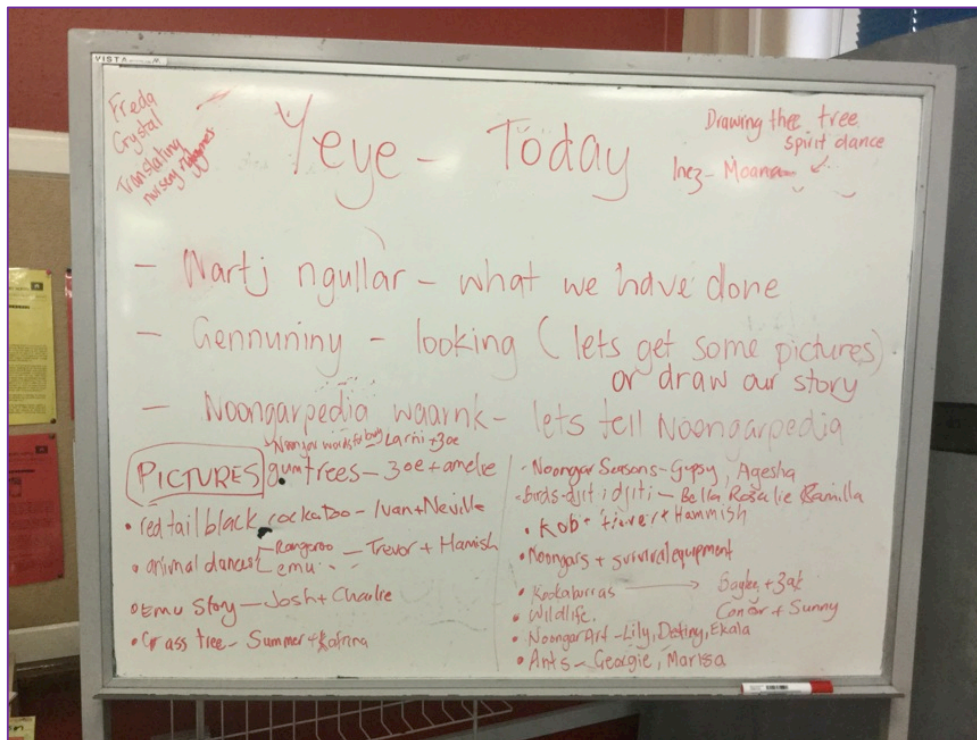
*Dave:* Christie and his colleagues might describe this as ‘situated practice’. They make reference to others who talk about the importance of ‘embodied’ learning that ‘emplaces’ students in the very environment they are learning about. These are quite abstract ideas. Another way of talking about this is to cite Yinjya Guyula, a Liya-Dhālinymirr man and lecturer in Yolŋu studies at Charles Darwin University. He describes this kind of learning much more poetically as:’

*...different from the education you get in the classrooms because the classrooms don’t talk to you. We’re learning out there under a tree, we’re learning out there in the bush walking around, the trees are always communicating with you. The hills, the land, the air are always communicating, teaching you, and understand every need that Yolŋu children have to go through .*



*Olman Wally teaches students through song, dance, movement and story. This dance  
This dance was about the wetj – the emu.*

*Ingrid:* During the sessions, we also made sure we gave students plenty of time to consider the problems and challenges that came when using the ‘pedia. We consistently emphasised that the project was partly about experimenting and trying new things. We wanted them to notice when things were difficult, when they felt uncomfortable, when they were unsure. This made it possible for quite complex topics to emerge such as *copyright* (how to use images of family), *referencing* (making sure they respectfully acknowledge elders whose knowledge may not be written), *behaviour management* and paying attention in real and virtual spaces (showing respect to guests as well as to online subjects).



*We used group discussion and older technologies like the whiteboard in a constant process of asking students what they were learning and what they wanted to put into the Noongarpedia for others to learn from.*

*Dave:* Some might call this exercising flexibility in the classroom and being responsive to the knowledge that emerges when learners become more active in production of knowledge. The Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire might have called this a ‘dialogical’ approach to knowledge, with education starting from the ‘generative themes’ and ideas of students. Here students are seen as what we are calling ‘knowledge agents’ from the start, laden with and active in the knowledge they are learning.

*Ingrid:* It also gave us a chance to gauge which type of contribution to Noongarpedia certain students felt worked; and where and when they felt most comfortable and confident doing what. Through this we identified potential article-writers, artists, photographers, and IT experts, and began to support those students in using their strengths to continue to contribute to the Noongarpedia site.

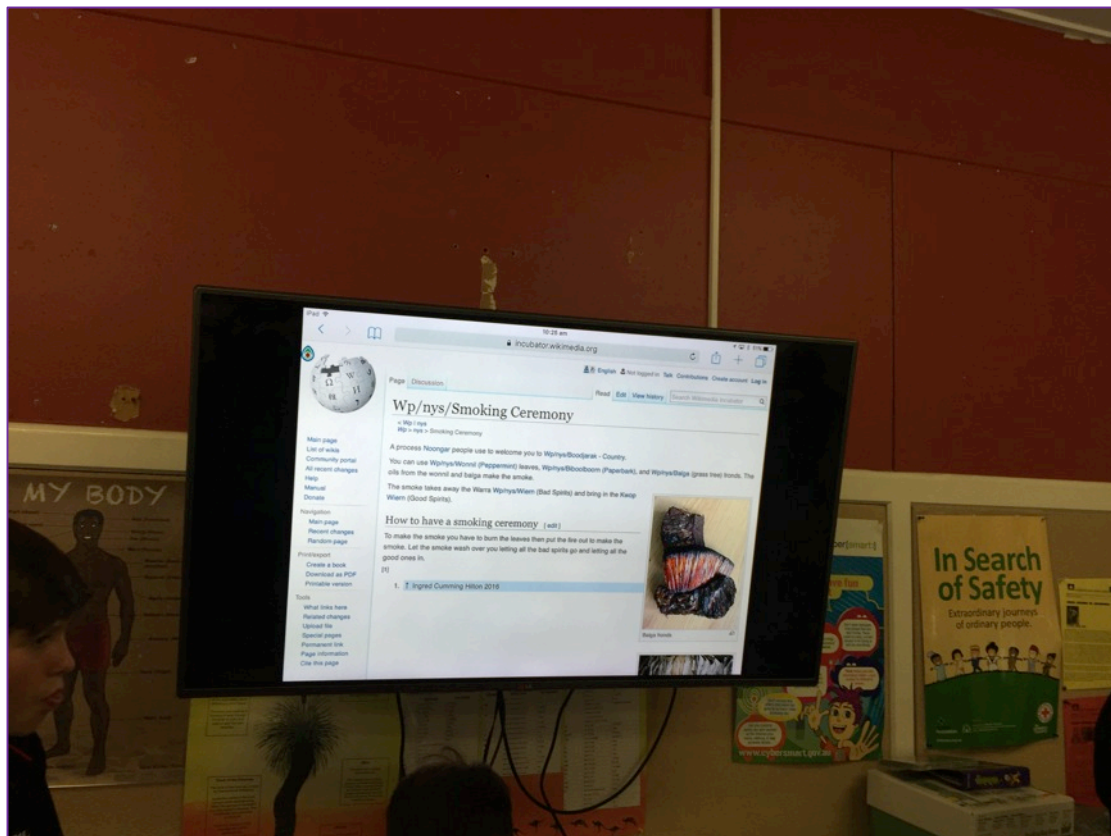


*A young fella engaged in research in class – on a couch, iPad in hand, notebook by his side and Noongar language resources at the front. He was one of the many students who would take many notes when we had Noongar facilitators and ask how things were spelt and pronounced. In one of the workshops, Olman Walley eventually said something like this in response ‘My family say it this way, others might say it another way ... I might spell that word like this ... but you might hear it differently and spell it the way you hear it. I reckon you should just write it down best you can and then check up on it later like I do. If you’ve got old people around you can ask them or you can use the dictionaries and things like that...’. So that is what young fella did.*

Some students were keen to make use of the Noongar Language Resources we would bring to each session. Using dictionaries, online resources and notes from the workshops with Noongar facilitators, this student is building Noongar language research skills. Photo by Jennie Buchanan

At the end of each session, the children were again asked to join the facilitator on the mat, to share with the group on the big screen, the different edits, pages or activity they engaged with or created. Out of these debriefs it became apparent that different students responded well to different modes of learning and knowledge production.





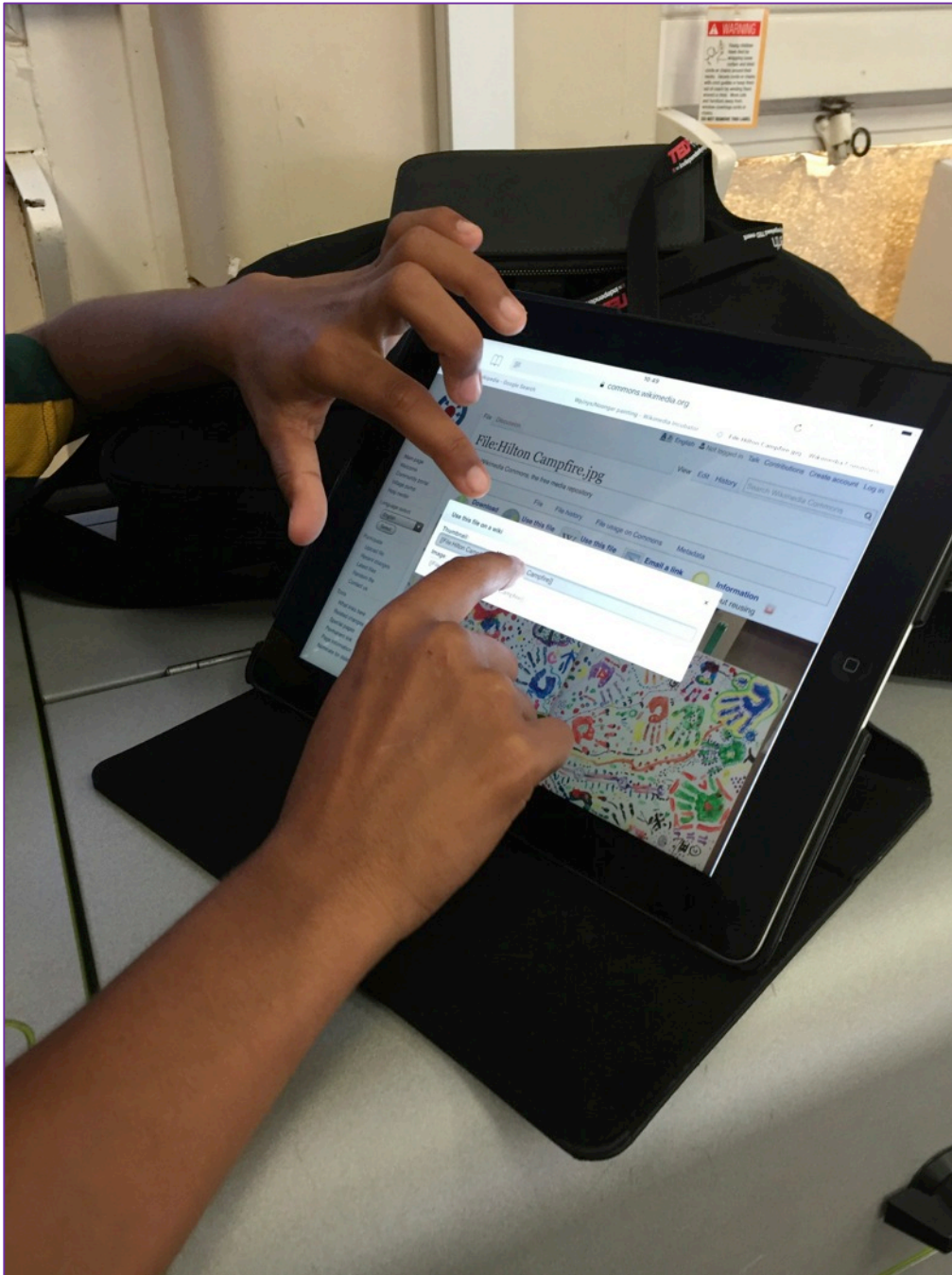
*Children show their live Noongarpedia entries to the rest of the class for sharing information and development of articles. This entry includes a text summary, referencing and use of an uploaded photo from Wiki Commons.*

Some children were able to create high quality entries that included the entire key aspects required to create a wiki page (sufficient research undertaken using their sources to create good quality content that had correct citation, knowing how to source, upload and enter images and sounds, and use of the correct formatting). Other children who still were early in their development of text-based literacy were able to contribute to the 'pedia in other ways such as collating photos, creating drawings or creating or finding audio to add to other pages created. This was possible because the 'pedia includes, perhaps even cherishes, multimedia use.



*After the workshops about Noongar art and symbols, students create their own work.*





*As well as developing new technical skills, uploading a photo of the artwork created in Noongar Art Workshop to Wiki Commons for a Noongarpedia entry on 'Noongar Art' required this 10-year old student to deal with issues of copyright, permission, categories and archiving labels.*

*Dave:* What you are saying is that the fact that the Noongarpedia project provides opportunities for multimedia use it succeeded in activating student learning and knowledge production. Inge Kral might say two things about this. First of all, she would say that giving Aboriginal kids a chance to involve themselves in multi-modal knowledge production is much more consistent with knowledge production and learning in the Indigenous domain. In places like Central Australia (where Kral



spends much of her time) cultural learning includes many different modes of learning from visual-spatial, musical, verbal-linguistic, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal-social, artistic, naturalistic and existential. Second, Kral would remind us that the skills-sets needed by young people in preparation for their future in the world are greatly concerned with digital literacy, multi-media use and becoming comfortable with ITCs.

*Ingrid:* It also has to be said that many students improved their overall behaviour and engagement in the classroom. This is what we noticed and what teachers confirmed in their feedback. I think this had much to do with the way the sessions were run (they felt like a valued contributor and consumer of knowledge and were supported as well as challenged to learn and develop their interpersonal and practical skills), the relevance of Noongar knowledge, and their enjoyment of the platforms they were able to use. Together this clearly increased the confidence in the children as they learned, developed and mastered the skills that were required to edit and contribute to the 'pedia.

*Dave:* From a conventional curriculum point of view, what do you think the Noongarpedia Project has had to offer?

*Ingrid:* Look, those of us who have been doing work in primary schools are not trained teachers or curriculum experts. However, I think it is fair to say that at the very least we are offering work in an area of national importance in terms of curriculum content. Indeed, all of the teachers involved in our work have commented on how helpful Noongarpedia has been in helping schools find practical ways of responding to the demands of the new Australian Curriculum.

*Dave:* Yes, it is probably instructive to cite directly the new standards in relation to 'learning outcomes' in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge:

*The Australian Curriculum sets consistent national standards to improve learning outcomes for all young Australians. ACARA acknowledges the gap in learning outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their non-Indigenous peers. It recognises the need for the Australian Curriculum to provide every opportunity possible to 'close the gap'.*

*Therefore, the Australian Curriculum is working towards addressing two distinct needs in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education:*

- *that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are able to see themselves, their identities and their cultures reflected in the curriculum of each of the learning areas, can fully participate in the curriculum and can build their self-esteem*
- *that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority is designed for all students to engage in*

*reconciliation, respect and recognition of the world's oldest continuous living cultures.*<sup>3</sup>

*Ingrid:* There are a number of things to say about these national standards and what we have been doing in Noongarpedia work in schools. The first is that those who have been involved in the development of the national curriculum acknowledge that there has been serious underachievement in relation to the objective of including Indigenous knowledge in our schools. This has equally serious consequences for both Noongar and non-Noongar children. This is particularly felt by teachers who work in schools with a significant proportion of Indigenous students, who now represent the front line in terms of reforming this situation.

The second observation to make is that most teachers we worked with feel that they are seriously under-resourced<sup>3</sup> to deal with that situation. The challenges confronting schools in relation to the resources available are badly disproportionate. All of the teachers involved in Noongarpedia work had very positive things to say about how important it has been in this regard. One primary school teacher articulated this in the following way:

*I have already trialled strategies to engage Aboriginal students. I work in a school where this is approximately 30 percent of the kids who come from Indigenous backgrounds. I've been a teacher for more than a decade. So I'd say I have some idea about how to work with Aboriginal students and their family. On the other hand, I have not been given any professional development around how or what I can use to embed Indigenous knowledge in the curriculum or how to make the new national curriculum work.*

*This is the first time I have been able to use something that someone else has developed.*

*I was really impressed. Noongarpedia is a great way of engaging with students. Noongarpedia also helped bridge the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, offering both a chance to experience a 'learning journey' together, where they could break down the barriers, the cultural divide.*

*We noticed that the kids started using the knowledge outside of the classroom, using Noongar language in the playground, in their own time. Other students in the school took note of this. This led to some sharing and some transfer of knowledge from those involved in Noongarpedia to others in the school.*

*Other positives of Noongarpedia included its value in increasing students' efficiency with IT and increasing their learning in other academic skill areas like literacy development and learning through the arts.*

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<sup>3</sup> Source: <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/crosscurriculumpriorities/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-histories-and-cultures/overview>.

*One of the stand-outs of Noongarpedia and something very timely is that it helps meet the criteria in the national curriculum. Not only have I been using it as a teaching resource, I have also found it helpful for my own learning. Being involved in the workshops with my class has really helped me think about the different ways I can engage with different students, particularly Noongar students.*

*Dave:* Jennie, can I ask you to talk about some of the work that went on with other schools?

*Jennie:* Let me talk about work we did with three classes of senior primary school students on a camp in Dwellingup, deep in a forest campsite. In May 2016, the Noongarpedia team ran three workshops at Koorngal campsite at the invitation of St Hilda's Primary School. Three groups of year 5/6 girls were involved. Noongarpedia facilitators were Ingrid Cumming and Jennie Buchanan.

A central element of our practice model is to work with paid Noongar cultural facilitators in our workshops with schools and children. For these sessions, we identified Noongar storyteller and dramatist, Beccy Garlett as a yorga (woman) with much to offer the children. She agreed to do the work with us and, in a planning session, we spent some time introducing the Noongarpedia project and platform to her. As well as offering her own specialist storytelling sessions with the groups, Beccy would also accompany us with our walks on country and Noongar knowledge sessions.

We were working on Bindjareb (the Noongar group from this region) boodjar (country). Ingrid and I met with elders and key people from the region before the session with the students. This partly happened serendipitously, as we caught up with a group of the senior and young people at the Dwellingup Hotel for dinner. They happened to be in town on important site protection business. Ingrid spoke with a number of elders about the project and they gave their nods to us doing our work in their boodjar. It was good to show them the Noongarpedia site, using our mobile phones to link into the site and to our Facebook page. Interestingly, a number of these people visited the Noongarpedia Facebook page and the Noongarpedia site in the days that followed. At the same time Ingrid made entries about key people from Bindjareb boodjar in response to our meeting and our work on country.

On our trip to Dwellingup Ingrid and I shared a vehicle, to keep costs down, to enable us to take time to talk about our work and ideas as we travelled and to allow us to acknowledge and come into country together as we moved through from Whadjuk Boodjar. On this particular trip, we were gifted with the sight of many rainbows as we drove through Bindjareb boodjar on a wet May day. We talked about how these represented for us signs of hope in a dark grey sky. We noted the trees and the



abundant bird life as we drove into the forest region. Boola darlung, wardung, kulbardis, honey eaters (pelicans, wrens, magpies etc.). We noted the Noongar names for the animals and trees as we travelled, making mental note to look for them on our walks with the students. I had also packed a gorgeous book called *Djerup: Noongar Birds* that the Noongar Boodjar Language Centre has published, so we could use it with the children.

*Ingrid:* On the day, we drove out to the Koorinal Campsite early so we could prepare ourselves for the sessions. The morning was frosty and cold and the bush was bursting with song and soft mists as we drove along. I was reminded of what I had been taught by my aunties and father, that Noongar katitjin is embodied in boodjar, in the djerap and in the soft breezes and fog of the morning. For Noongar, katitjin nyininy boodjar: country is where knowledge sits. Katitjin wangkiny nidja boodar: country speaks to us the knowledge for that place. Dwellingup, or the place of mists, was literally alive to its name that morning with gentle mist oozing out of the soil, almost as if country was alive with smoke. We drove through the bush with the car windows down, silent, so we could have our senses open to the place that we were about to work in.



*Driving through Dwellingup mists on bush track to camp site.*

We drove to a place known as Scarp Pool, parked next to a short track that led us on a little walk down to the magnificent Murray River that flowed strongly from early winter rains. Mist encircled the space and we breathed in the thick air in a reverence. It was about 7.30 am. This was the way we approached much of our work in schools,

seeking signs that we were welcome, we were on the right track and that what we are doing things ‘proper way’.

*Jennie:* Ingrid sang out to the birdiers – the ancestors – to introduce us to this boodjar and make it clear what we were doing. We offered our respects, from deep in our koorbals (guts). Ingrid sang out that we know them as bosses for this place, kura, yeye, boorda (yesterday, today and tomorrow). We chose a rock and wiped sweat from under our arms to place in the waters as we said our names and our reasons for being there, so we are known, so our smell tells about us.



*Dwellingup. Scarp Pool waters.*

*Ingrid:* This is what we have been taught to do by our elders and this is what we have begun to do. Ingrid (Noongar) continues to practice this way of being in place, as her familial lines have for thousands of years. Jennie (non-Noongar) practices these rituals not only as a mark of respect, not only because she has an obligation to make sure cultural safety is maintained for workers and students, but also because this is part of the educational practice that shapes teaching in Noongar knowledge settings. It is how the project has begun to do business and it is part of the way the project will succeed. Both of us work in this manner because we know how important it is to introduce ourselves to country as a way of keeping culturally safe and honouring Noongar ways of doing and being in our work together.

We spend time here quietly reflecting on its beauty and strength, glad for the day ahead, djerapin (happy) to be in this kwopidak (beautiful) country. We would bring back the students to this place later in the day.

*Dave:* You describe the business of teaching and learning in a way reminiscent of the approach of Yolgnu educationalist Jungal: ‘Class rooms don’t talk to you, the hills, the land, the air are always communicating.’ Likewise Guyula describes the way country acts as teacher:

*When I’m teaching in the bush, it is not only I that are teaching or talking, but the land is talking with me. I can turn around, the bulunu (wind) blows gently and gives me the feeling of what the stories are and the stories are automatically being told by the land itself, through me.*

*Jennie:* We arrive in time at Koorinal Campsite to meet with staff and orientate ourselves before we met the students. The campsite is big and the land runs down to the river. The dormitories and common spaces are well laid out with a huge front verandah overlooking a jarrah, marri, and balga filled bushland. Wardung (crows) and monarch (cockatoos) fly overhead and a huge canopy of trees sit over the camp areas making it feel protected and special.

The camp didn’t have a strong internet connection available so we made use of our own personal phone hotspots. We had planned around this challenge by running sessions that provide information taken from books and other non-digital sources and turning the focus on country and getting students audio recording, taking photos and creating the content for later Noongarpedia entries. This meant that we could do lots without requiring much online access.

### **Acknowledgement of Bindjareb Birdiers and Welcome to Country**

*Ingrid:* The wet, misty morning with light rains offered a challenge to our plan to set up a karla (fire). The lighting skills of our team were challenged a little but with some laughter and ingenuity we manage to get a fire started in the camp meeting space. The wet wood gave out a deeply scented white smoke for us to start the work with students and their teachers.





*Starting the welcoming fire.*



*Gathering together as we get the fire started.*

*Jennie:* We had the kids gather in a semicircle to take them through a Welcome to Country ceremony. This was led by Ingrid who had earlier asked Bindjareb elders for permission to do this in our sessions. She sang a beautiful piece in Noongar language and the students were quiet and attentive. The smoke wafted around and over the group, perfect for the ceremonial start to things.

As the fire softened, we introduced ourselves to the group of about 22 students and told them about our work and their potential part in it. We briefly describe the Noongarpedia site and told them about what we had learnt this morning and our meeting the night before with Noongar knowledge holders. We explained that we would spend some time outside and ‘on-country’ before we returned to learn how to create entries and edit on the Noongarpedia.

#### *Session One: Nyitting Time with Beccy Garlett*

*Ingrid:* To start our workshop activities, we moved back upstairs to the campsite common-room. The room had floor to ceiling windows that kept the outside bushland very much in the picture, wooden floors, and doorways to the shared dorm rooms where the girls had probably giggled and slept in the night before. This offered a comfortable and safe inside space for the students and us to work.

Beccy Garlett then ran an energetic and joyful storytelling session. She was able to introduce key Noongar ideas and themes to the students using a mixture of narrative, puppetry, movement and song. Beccy taught the students about country and caring for it. Using songs and games, she shared Noongar language and names for animals and body parts.

*Jennie:* The students were keen to learn the Noongar names for things and were happily involved in the singing throughout the workshop. By providing a positive interactive space, Beccy made a moorditj (strong) start to our day with the students. Her work offered a way for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to connect with Noongar katitjin through a mix of language, story, and play. This session was a beautiful stepping off point for our next workshop component where our plan was to walk on country and learn together.

*Dave:* what you are describing is a learning environment where you combine physical and creative activity, song, walking, listening and later posting.

In this way students are doing a range of things at the same time. First and foremost, they are learning elements of Noongar knowledge by wangar lking along with Noongar mentors. The design and architecture of this workshop process provides a strong link among learning, doing, producing, recording, rehearsing, repeating and acting as critical players in the process of Noongar knowledge maintenance. In ways that are somewhat consistent with ancient Noongar modes of learning, students were



building their knowledge-base by listening to people more senior than them, trialling what they have learnt and then passing this on to others. In western education parlance we might variously describe this as *action learning* (learning by doing rather than instruction), *scaffolding* (learning by building upon previous ‘layers’ of learning), *naturalistic learning* (education outside of a traditional classroom context), or *mixed mode learning* (drawing on multiple intelligences and exercising oral, aural, visual, artistic, tactile and cultural repertoires).

This work also creates a very strong social environment where young people work together and in conjunction with others from older generations. In this case, using state-of-the art digital technology designed to make it essential to draw on Noongar knowledge-holders, demands that young people, with lower levels of cultural knowledge, work with adults and with knowledge passed down from senior Noongar. Each age-group, in their own way, has knowledge and dexterity that they can share and draw upon to strengthen their relationships, and build their cultural and social repertoires. Finally, and perhaps most profoundly, this process involves young people in the production of a bank of Noongar words and phrases that others can use, while at the same time helping them to extend their own learning about these words and phrases. Indeed, it is their involvement in the production process that offers them the most powerful opportunities for learning.

### *Session Two: Walking and Learning Together*

*Jennie:* Starting from where the students are, we ask them to tell us what they know and what they have noticed about the campsite. Before we started our next session outside and on country we talked a little about Noongarpedia as an online encyclopaedia. We described the way that encyclopaedias and knowledge can be made and how our project is about Noongar knowledge and content. We asked if they were interested in contributing entries based on what they learn in today’s sessions and received a very positive ‘yes’!

We set the students up as investigators on behalf of Noongarpedia and invited them to spend some time out of the workshop space. We asked them to combine the act of listening and participating in the walk with taking notes, making observations and taking photos using the technology with which they were most comfortable. Most students had iPads, iPhones, notebooks, pens or pencils. We deliberately encouraged students to use digital devices in this session, and to see these tools not as distractions but as an integral part of the journey ahead. We asked the students to work in pairs or threes to allow for different kinds of action and attention. One student might be the photographer, one might be the note taker or memory holder, another might be the watcher and the questioner. We also asked them to swap these roles throughout the sessions. Students were attentive when asked to engage in this way, with the environment, technology and team-making all in unison.



When everyone was ready to start we gathered together at the base of the camp dormitory steps.

The campsite is magnificent. They started by standing at the top of a hill that slopes its way to the river below. It is studded with marri and jarrah trees. Balgas (grass trees) sprout at the base of their taller companions. As a group we look out to our wonderful ‘natural classroom.’ Ingrid, Beccy, and I asked students to talk about the camp. Are they enjoying it? What are some of their favourite things to do? What had they noticed and discovered over the last couple of days. In this way we began with their experiences of Noongar boodjar and katitjin.

The students spoke about some of the things they have been making during the camp and proudly pointed to their collaborative efforts of making mia mias (Noongar shelters) with the wood and other source materials from the property. They walked us to the various places they have played and made things in. We asked them what they used, how they made the mia mias, and what did they know about them as shelters. As we walked together in a large group, Ingrid and Beccy then began to offer Noongar perspectives on the building and use of a mia mia, the children asked questions and pointed things out as we moved around their handiwork.



*Mia Mia construction at the camp site.*

With notebooks, iPads, iPhones we set out on our walk on country with the students. To focus the group we reminded them of various Noongar words for the relevant body parts that we would be using on our walk. Walking on our djena (feet), looking with

our mieoyl (eyes), listening with our dwongk (ears), smelling with our boola (nose) and speaking with our daarl (mouth). Ingrid also introduced them to their weirn (spirit) and the importance of feeling connected, noticing how we felt. In this way the walk became an active language and knowledge experience, giving students a chance to learn in tandem with active moving, sharing their work in social relationships and repeating and rehearsing what they had learned by going over things. We also taught the students the two Noongar words of aliwah and balay (look and watch out), both to use in an emergency and as a means of keeping people attentive. When they heard these words they were asked to stop what they were doing and listen to Ingrid or Beccy.

*Dave:* This sounds as though you were developing a rich mnemonic educational practice, drawing on memory devices and learning techniques that aid information retention. Mnemonics aid knowledge transmission by combining information and associations with something meaningful and rich multi-experiential activities. This is a very powerful learning device that allows students to experience strong retention of the information. What is impressive here is that you are moving beyond the use of popular mnemonic techniques such as creating lists and auditory activities such as short poems, word associations, acronyms or memorable phrases. You appear to be building a distinct Noongar approach to mnemonics, using visual, kinaesthetic, spatial, aural and musical stimulation. Perhaps we could say that you were inviting students to listen and talk back to boodjar in an act of Noongar hermeneutics.

*Jennie:* Ingrid led the group. Beccy and I assisted. A member of the teaching staff and Outdoor Ed staff came along as well. With some clear behavioural boundaries set earlier we set off down a bush track. Ingrid spoke about the trees and plants that we saw as we walked. She offered Noongar names and uses for them and stopped to point things out for the children to notice. Groups of children asked questions and pointed out interesting things as we moved through the bush. We gave them time to take notes, to take photos or draw pictures. We remembered how important it is to tell children not to pick the flowers or fruits on bush plants, to not eat the sap or nectar, and not to disturb animals and insects. We asked the students why this would be important so they could help generate ideas and reasons for being safe on country. Some obvious responses such as not eating something poisonous were top of the list. We also talked about how it is important to think about how we all can be part of healthy relationships to country by seeking out people and information from Noongar knowledge holders. This led to talking about Noongar as custodians and traditional owners of the country we walk on. So in learning about single plants and uses we are able to get students thinking about bigger themes such as karnyarn (respectful speaking), birniny (carefully picking things up), korl beddik beddik (gently going), and quop katatjin (thinking well).

The students were keen photographers and asked many questions about what they were seeing on the walks. Beccy and Ingrid offered information that they had learned



from their families and their own studies. Often a description of something would be prefaced with, ‘My Nan used to...’ or ‘My Uncles told me...’ along with ‘Before colonisation, us Noongars used to...’. These ways of framing the information show the relationships with ‘knowledge agents’ that exist for our team. At the same time as offering these verbal stories and links to the past, we knew that we could look at numerous public documents and articles to back up the information provided about the names of plants, birds, animals and seasonal weather details. The point is to make use of the wealth of Noongar knowledge and to accentuate the importance of relationships in passing it on. I think that these kinds of walks and talks with others highlight the practice well. We have a number of photos that we can use to show the way the groups interacted with Ingrid and Beccy, with each other, and with the environment. This illustrates the way that country, story and, technology can interact.



*Learning on Noongar boodjar, students recording with their iPads on country with Ingrid Cumming.*





*Beccy Garlett with students.*

Marri, Jarrah, Balga....djenaniny, ni, yoowarkoorl...keela, wardung, kulbardi...aliwah!  
Ni, boodjar.... The sounds of Noongar language echo through the bush as we walk  
together. The names of the trees and plants, directions to stop and listen...language  
being used by Noongar yoks and non-Noongar kulunkgas as we walked together in  
Bindjareb boodjar.

Students being introduced to concepts of Birdiyar and wiern – visiting the river.

*Ingrid:* As we walked downhill to the river we highlighted the special relationship Noongar have with the river and the pool we were about to visit. The students responded well by moving quietly behind Ingrid as requested. For the second time that day, Ingrid and I greeted the birdiyer. Students stood silently and attentively as Ingrid sang out and introduced everyone. I explained the ritual of acknowledgement of the spiritual bosses for this place and asked the girls to participate by choosing a small rock to wipe their sweat on to throw into the pool as they introduced themselves and asked for permission to be on country. This led to a few nervous giggles, but most responded with interest and reverence as again they were given a chance physically to participate in another Noongar-led ceremonial activity. The students were then taught how to introduce themselves in Noongar, and each asked to say: ‘Nyarn kwel... (their name)’ and offer their sweat as a sign of acknowledgement of spirit of country and to keep themselves culturally safe at the river and beyond.



*Scarp Pool, Dwellingup.*

We turned to walk back up the hill as students continued to document their findings on their iPads. Questions continued all the way back to the campsite, and shouts of excitement as a bird or lizard was spotted. Rocks were inspected and opportunities taken to educate the students on the importance of leaving rocks and sticks in place so minimal disturbance is made to natural habitats.





*The goona mia ... 'we provided the Noongar names for toileting...'*

Not all learning was about the natural habitat and not all was serious. As we walked past the long drop toilets we provided the Noongar names for toileting. Lots of laughter ensued, but new words entered the students' lexicon.

### *Session Three: Bringing things together with Noongarpedia*

*Jennie:* Red-cheeked and exuberant after our walk we head back into the common-room for our final session of the day. Stimulated by the experience of learning on country students chattered loudly, full of stories from their walk and ready for a drink and some lunch. We share a meal with the teachers and Outdoor Education Staff and talked about Noongarpedia. The Outdoor Ed staff became more interested when they realised that active, physical learning is a key element of the work. It seems that when you say 'online or digital learning', some fear that it is all in front of a computer, passive and removed from the world.

We asked the students to gather in the common-room after lunch for our final session of the day. While some might think that seeing 25 students animatedly talking with



their partners while looking at their iPads, might mean that you have lost control of the proceedings. This was not the case. As we walked around the group we could see that the students were looking at each other's photos from the walk, asking questions about what they found out, hesitantly trying out Noongar names for things and giggling. This final session allowed the students to share what they had learnt and we were already on the way before the formal session had started.

For this session, we directed the students to choose one thing that they had learnt and to prepare a short talk about it so the rest of the class could learn from their work. In pairs and small groups, the students proceeded to discuss and share information as we walked among them, answering questions and offering clarification when needed.

As this was happening a team member set up the Noongarpedia page, using a phone hotspot connection. This allowed access to the site and enabled the students to see some of their contributions as they made them. In other school settings it was good to have WiFi for all to use in order to get comfortable with the Noongarpedia platform. However, in this case, the lack of full WiFi access meant that the students focused on working together to discuss, share, ask questions and then recount their learning in oral presentations to others (core communication skills for primary school students). As students were presenting what they had learnt we began to record what they said by making Noongarpedia entries, also demonstrating the process by drawing upon a large projector screen. Critical here was modelling how to make entries and upload photographs.

This element of the workshop used a lively game approach to finding out what the students had learnt. Ingrid and Beccy led the session with questions for the whole group. How many djiti djitis did you see? Who saw the karda? Did anyone go the goona mia? Using a mixture of language, they asked the girls to respond to many questions to demonstrate the breadth of their learning that day.



*Students were keen to share their experience in this session in the common-room.*

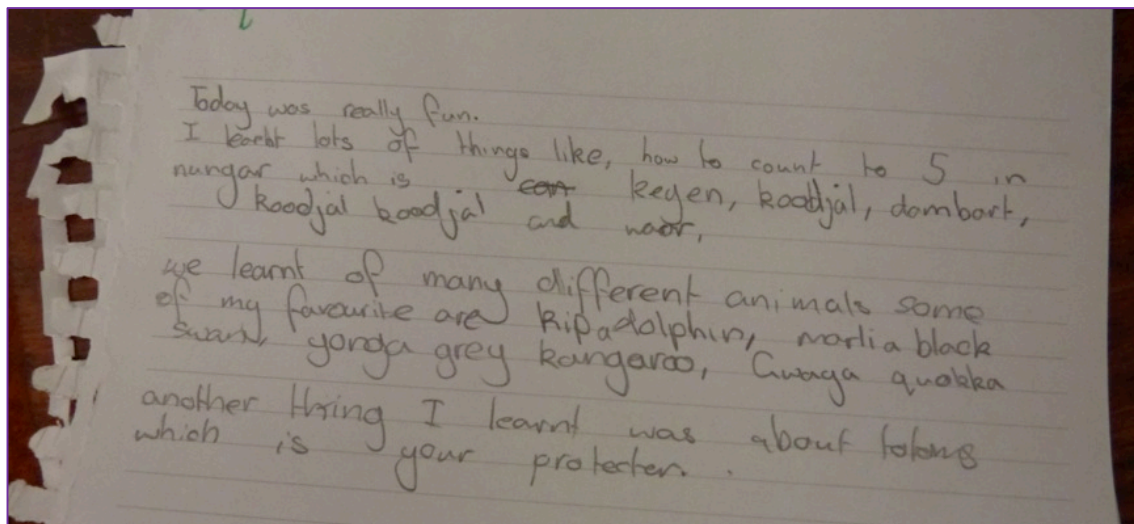
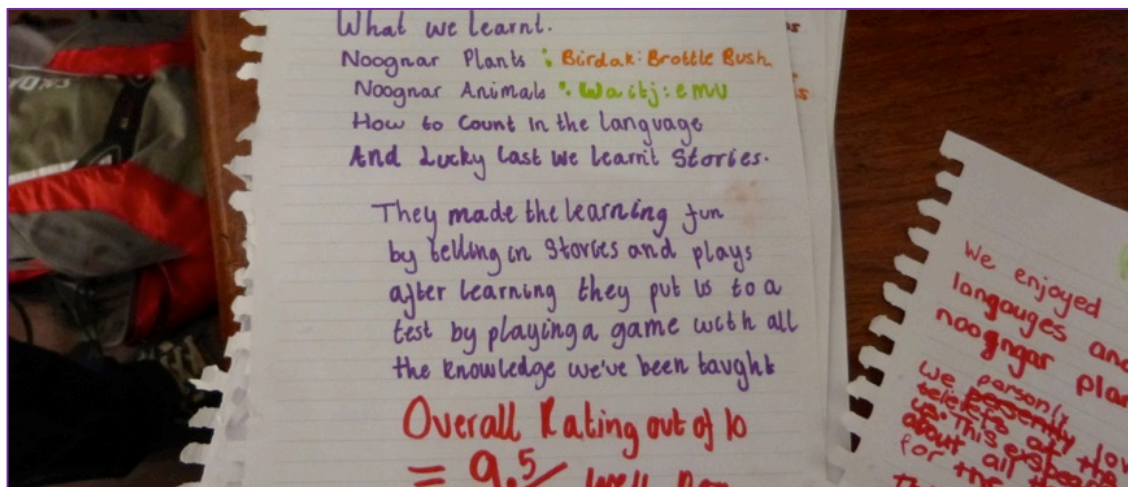
Finally, we moved into thinking about how they could contribute their learning to Noongarpedia. We showed them the Front Page and moved into the section on boodjarak-country. This section has a lot of images rather than text so people can look at a picture, click on to it and move into their own entry in Noongar or English. We went through an exercise of seeing if there was already an entry on a chosen topic and creating new pages when needed. The students watched this happen on the screen in the room and were able to ask questions as we created and edited using their verbal reports.



*Student sharing her iPad photos and information with Ingrid Cumming to create a Noongarpedia entry.*

We would need to upload photos at a later session, and the students would require WiFi access to do this with their material. So we invited the class teacher to build an exercise for students to undertake when they returned to school. We also checked Wikimedia Commons to see if any photos were already available for use. By doing this in front of the students we had begun to introduce them to the possibilities and structures that exist in Wikipedia and Noongarpedia.

The day finished well. Students were keen to see their work on the Noongarpedia site. They wrote up some colourful reflections of their experiences for us and finally participated in a sea of hands mural in acknowledgement of the day we worked together. It was National Harmony Day.



*Student reflections*

**Choo, quabbaduk kedala!**