



Balnarring Preschool & Infant Welfare Association



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Learning and Living with nature

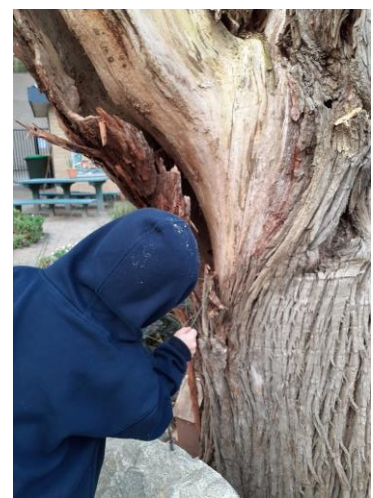
Gareeal Reflections August 2021

In Gareeal we have had a busy month. The children have been really enjoying spending time together and we have been watching their play become more complex with greater interaction with peers. We are also becoming more aware of our feelings. We have explored books about feelings, discussed different feelings we can have and how they change as well as different ways we can calm our feelings through using our senses. We spent time focusing on feelings being OK and that all feelings whether sad, yukky, uncomfortable or exciting come and go. Some of the things we discussed together which we do and can help big feelings that aren't nice to go are to take deep breaths, smell flowers, read a book or listen to a story, pat an animal or cuddle a teddy or friend / grown up, watch the clouds or nature, listen to music or sounds in nature like the ocean, wind or rain. We have also continued to focus on children's friendship skills, supporting them to join in play, to ask

peers names, to take turns and to be patient and wait turns. We have also been encouraging children to think about how a peer may feel. This is a very tricky concept for children and takes many years to develop, even as adults it can be difficult to walk in another's shoes. Role modelling and supporting children by talking out loud and naming others feelings will help children to begin to develop greater awareness and empathy for others.

Over the past month at kinder we have also been noticing and talking about the subtle changes in the weather and in nature on the biik (land) at kinder and the reserve next door. We have been supporting children to develop their

observation skills by encouraging them to explore with their senses and to take the time to be still and look and listen closely. As we near the end of what N'arweet Carolyn Briggs explains in her book 'Journey Cycles of the BoonWurrung' as the BoonWurrung season of Beerreen which means 'no more sun', we have been able to see and hear differences on the biik such as the wattle blossoming, sap on the trees and the kookaburras and wood ducks squabbling over who



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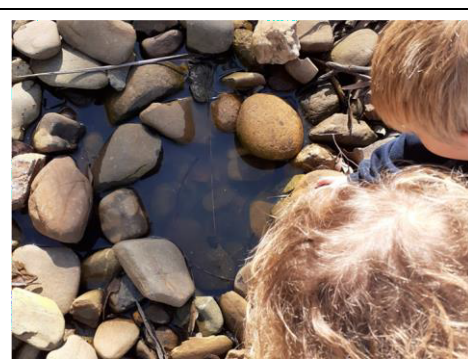
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has ownership of the nesting box at kinder! Slowing down and listening to nature was also supported through our mat time experiences where the children have enjoyed our new song Busy Busy Busy Rushing All Around by Sharron Mirii Bell a Wiradjuri Gamilaraay woman.



During our time on BoonWurrung Country one of our bigger discoveries was the faint frog noises we could hear and so we decided to investigate further. We didn't see any frogs but we did find something very special in the small pools of water by the central kangaroo grass; tadpoles. The children were mesmerised by the tadpoles we found swimming in the path puddles and in the river rocks. We had to stay still and be patient and look quietly to catch a glimpse of them. We also had to track them with our eyes which is an important skill we need to be able to read in the future. They were so engaged and curious about them we collected some to look more closely at them and see their different sizes before carefully placing them back in their home. We noticed their colours and different sizes as well as how quickly they could swim and dart about and hide amongst twigs and leaves in the water. We continued at kinder to explore frog lifecycles the following weeks.



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We also noticed that the kangaroo grasses had grown since we last visited the reserve and enjoyed comparing how tall we were with them and trying to find pieces taller than we were. Being out for the whole session allowed the children time to be and engage in play. They practiced gross motor skills as they balanced on rocks and tree branches, took risks as they climbed and jumped from different heights, explored wattle and sap and played games like fishing and camping.



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We have continued to introduce new BoonWurrung words into the children's learning expanding on some of the animals they know as well as beginning to say noon godjin (Thankyou) at the end of our session. We also introduced N'arweet Carolyn Briggs story 'The Time of Chaos' with the children. We explored the story whilst on BoonWurrung Country and I told the story through the story telling tree. We spoke about how a very long time ago when only first people lived on the land and there were no brick houses or roads the tree saw that when the land wasn't cared for and people took too much food, left rubbish, didn't care for the waterways and overfished, wasted food and were not kind to each (remembering to use kind words and share), then Bundjil was cross and no one felt happy and the animals and the biik were sad. We focused on the BoonWurrung people remembering to take care of the biik and waterways like Bundjil and Waang told them, sharing and being kind, thinking friends to each other and the biik then mother earth was calm and peaceful again and everyone was happy. I related it to how we were also kind friends and cared for the biik by collecting rubbish when we are out, the story of Benny Bungarra and how we can help to make sure we take care of the biik and waterways by recycling and reusing. If you would like to understand Carolyns story further, please refer to these links from last months newsletters.

Full animation - Dreaming (BoonWurrung)

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=KDc1yggfVAY>

Shorter animation with N'arweet narration - Baykeepers Time of Chaos

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=6fSRJ03oDwc&vl=en>



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We had our first fire in Gareeal and had a wonderful time making damper people before heading on down to the fire pit together. We spent time learning about the rules at the fire to keep us safe. Kim our fire expert, showed us how to use flints and children had a turn. They were encouraged to use their senses and smell the smoke, look at the flames and feel the heat. We had a great time at the fire and loved eating our damper people!



Thankyou to Sarah who filled in for me when I had a cold. The children had a wonderful time with her. It shows how they have developed a strong sense of belonging and are becoming flexible learners as they could adapt to the changes. They enjoyed a very special mini-Olympics day. Well done, I hear they all made a medal and had lots of fun practicing different gross motor skills, creating activities and taking risks.



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Some of the other experiences that the children have been enjoying are sensory play with slime (lux flakes), oobleck / goop (corn flour) and prints and markings in playdough. During these experiences staff support children to describe and reflect on what they are doing and feeling which helps to develop rich vocabulary for children. They also help to develop children's fine motor skills by building strength in their hand muscles which they need to build dexterity to use and manipulate objects with more precision. They have also enjoyed exploring feelings and faces through their art and have been observing and looking at their faces and talking about what they can see, naming what parts there are and pulling different faces to show different feelings. Gareeal have also been enjoying a variety of different board games which have allowed us to support turn taking, interactions with peers, good sportsmanship and conversation and language development.



Following more recent news from the government to close kindergartens for children and family's safety, we have begun to provide you all with access to a drop box folder where I will upload videos and documents for your children on Friday afternoons. The overwhelming response was that families needed a remote program that was flexible and not based on zoom. The main aim of these videos is for your children to continue to feel connected to us and the kinder and to keep that relationship strong. We will continue to offer play-based ideas which build on your children's interests and strengths from the program so any videos, photos, drawings or messages you would like to share with us would be greatly appreciated for us to continue to see your child's interests. However, there is no expectation or requirement that families watch the videos or do the activities. Each family can decide what works for them which is why we have decided that on Friday 3rd September we will also provide a short drop in zoom to say hi and listen to Lisa read a story to those who would like too. Again, this is



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not something that all children will want to do or be able to do so please do not feel obliged or push your child to join or join in if they don't wish too. As a couple of families have shown interest in connecting this way, we thought we would give it a go. The time and zoom link will be sent out on Thursday. If you do have any concerns or want to get in touch with me over the coming weeks, please feel free to contact the mobile phone and I will get back to you as soon as possible.

THANKS for your continued support

JILL



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