



Living and Learning together with Boon Wurrung Country

Dear Weelam group 2022,

I have just returned from a four day trip to the Lands of the Larrakia Peoples, Salt Water Country with Jill, Manameet and Garareel teacher. Landing at Darwin airport we were greeted with the heat of these lands, the jumpers we had left home in were quickly packed away, not required again until we landed back in Melbourne. This trip to the national Early Childhood Reconciliation Symposium was made possible through the preschool being a recipient of one the 2021 Narragunnawali awards. The two and half day Symposium brings together Teachers and educators from all around this land we know as Australia. We were offered opportunities to listen to the experiences and stories of many First Peoples, all offered their perspectives on both the impact of past and current government policies, the ongoing realities of racism, implications of lost languages, and the impact on the environment when First Peoples ways to care, show respect and know their responsibilities, their relationships to Mother Earth are ignored. The Symposium also was an opportunity to showcase many wonderful and inspiring programs. There was a strong commitment to change, to continue to educate everyone of the importance of reconciliation and how this was everyone's responsibility both non-indigenous, and First Peoples. As part of the program, I joined a panel of Narragunnawali award recipients and the Narragunnawali team on the stage (with a few hundred peoples watching). I felt very proud of our preschool as a short film was shown of our centre, and we were asked to share our thoughts on both our personal and centres practices towards taking responsibility reconciliation. The conversations and questions from the many I spoke to after helped me to understand how much we have learnt and how everyday practices for Balnarring preschool are still hoped for by many services.

As part of the Balnarring preschools ways of showing gratitude for the opportunities given to us to attend the Symposium we were able to gift copies of the Bundjil, the Creator and Barraeemal story books. These stories as told by N'Arweet Dr. Carolyn Briggs, Boon Wurrung Elder and made into story books over the past few years with illustrations from the children at our preschool were gifted to the many First Peoples who were our teachers for these days, and to the Narragunnawali team. One book was given to the inspiring team who spoke to us from Groot Eylandt (Island), this book will become part of their playgroup resources. Huge thankyou's to Kim, Suzy, Beth and Mary who were your teachers for Weelam group while I was away and enabled me to represent the preschool and continue my learning. I enjoy reading their reflections that were sent to me each day. I look forward to sharing more of my reflections with you as we chat and further as we acknowledge Reconciliation Week later this month.

Womin djeka Teddy James to Weelam group



On the last day of term one we farewelled Sarah as it was time for her to start her maternity leave. I know she had plans to rest and get lots of things ready, however Teddy could wait no longer and was born on Easter Sunday. Sarah, Ross, the dog, cat and Teddy James (TJ) are now settling into their life as a family. We are planning to have a zoom catch soon so Teddy can meet all the children whose voices he has been listening to while Sarah was at Kinder. We are currently exploring who will be the replacement educator for this Sarah's position and I will keep you updated with who is joining us each session till this is finalized.

Toast Thursday around the fire: *we have begun to make our toast on the campfire*



There was great excitement as the children prepared the wood and fire. Starting with little sticks, making a 'tent' with some paper underneath. Filled buckets of water placed close by for safety. When ready we all gathered.



Before the fire was lit we all sat around to talk about 'Fire', how fire can help us, why we need to be respectful around the fire and how we can move safely within this space. Together we agreed to how to walk, sit and hold our cooking tongs as we cooked our toast. With the fire started we took time to watch the fire, listen to the sounds of the flames, talk about the colours we saw and sing about how the flames moved. With the fire ready the children took turns to cook their own toast, they learnt how quickly it might cook depending where you put it in the fire and discovered the importance of watching carefully. Once cooked the children were supported to spread their own toast and then sit around the fire to eat. We have just begun introducing the children to how to make sparks with our flints in preparation for the next time the weather allows us to light the fire again. Unfortunately our next planned time was too windy, so we talked about how it was too dangerous to have a fire in this weather, so we pretended instead.



Becoming designers and Engineers:

The children have become very engaged with the building, art, craft and construction experiences. They have been extending on their ideas, working with plans in mind and are actively sharing these times with their friends. These experiences challenge each child to find ways to visualize their thoughts and to find ways to create what they are aiming to achieve. Sometimes this goes to plan. However, there are often moments that require further thought, reconsideration of what you want to do and the need to find another way to achieve their goals. We have been supporting the children to become problem solvers, to manage times which don't go as planned and explore ways to overcome the challenges. Working with a friend requires negotiation with others and the sharing of ideas and tasks. Our sessions support each child to engage in these experiences for extended periods of time, to work uninterrupted, to know support will be offered if they require and return to work if they wish. Last week the children were being asked to develop their art and craft skills as Acts of Kindness, to think of others and make special gifts for their Mums.



**the art/ craft experiences require using fine motor skills*

**As children work together there are many conversations*

Learning with Country:



Together we have been travelling further as we explore and observe the changes in the many environments that are our learning spaces. These are often shared times, opportunities to be active as well as sit quietly looking, wondering and talking about what they see and might find.



The children are climbing higher...



Discoveries are shared with others. Moments of shared curiosity.



Just some of our discoveries that have supported us with our further learning.



**we wondered what had happened.*



**can you find the crab?*



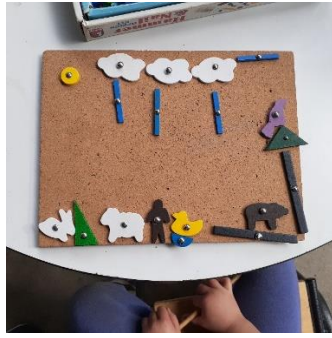
**many are very small.*

Learning about Cuttle fish:



Our discoveries on the beach have led us to wonder about and explore what Cuttle fish are further. We wondered about the white hard shapes we were finding on the beach, where did they come from and what did it look like before it was washed up on the beach. Last week we began watching 'The Cuttle fish' movie' this was a short video to see what a cuttle fish looks like, how they swim and discover how they camouflage themselves, change colours and reproduce. The next day when we made popcorn for lunch the children asked if we could watch the movie again, so we made our own theatre, and all watched together.

We are continuing to build on all our experiences and follow the children's interests:



**New puzzle challenges *further ways to make stories * Exploring pattern making within our play dough*



The Map to everywhere:

Within the program as part of supporting each child to develop their sense of Belonging and Connection with the spaces and environments we explore and learn within we often make maps. Initially these are drawn by the teaching team; often in the sand at the beach or on the ground at Bush camp. The children have begun drawing their own maps, copying what they have seen their teachers do and extending this into their drawings. The maker of this Map told me it was the 'Map to Everywhere'.

What is Happening in the Future: *Please save these dates and more information will follow*

Weelam group Family Event at Kinder: *we will be planning a Family event at Kindergarten during the month ahead please look out for the special invitation, once the planning is completed, we will let you know.*



Reconciliation Week:

27 May to 2nd June

Save this date:

Mabo Walk: Willum

Warrain: Hastings... *Come join us 11am Pelican Park to begin the walk.*



Come and play Roster: *Families supporting the teaching team and the children is a very important part of our program. Many parents have been joining us, this allows us to create further smaller group experiences, extend the program and for our families to share their strengths and interests with us. Please place your name on the Roster inside the gate, come join us for a session or for a couple of hours, lets us know what works for you. We look forward to you being with us in the program.*

The White Folders: We hope you all enjoyed sharing the stories and work within your child's White Folder with them over the holiday break. If you have any questions about the reflections and feedback for us, we would greatly appreciate hearing from you. Please return the folders to us now as we have already new stories and reflections to add. Remember you are always welcome to add stories from home to the folders too so we can share them with each other at preschool.

2023: *Many of you have begun to ask about next year, your child going to school and other questions. Please remember I am available to have conversations beyond chats in the playground with each other, just let me know if you wish to catch up and we can make a time to meet and talk.*

We look forward to sharing more stories and reflections with everyone in the future, Ann