

The Aboriginal Languages Trust 2022 Languages Gathering Highlights Report





Dhinawan'gu Garay (Emu's Words)

Our lands and mountains are continuously growing and connecting with each other (purple and pink dot and wave lines), and our People are connected through the identity we have in Country (purple and pink circles connected). I pay respect to my own Country, Gomeroi Country, our waterholes and rivers (in green). I pay respect to the Sun (orange) and to Waaway the Rainbow Serpent, who connect all People, Animals and Countries. I pay respect to our shared Dreaming (in blue), the stars of Mooki (Mugaay) the Milky Way (white dots) and our Ancestors (circles within circles). Our Languages hold all of this and connect us all (many different coloured lines, many Languages). I pay respect to the old Dhinawan Aunt, teaching the nephew Language of his Country and the Dreaming of his Ancestors in the Mooki (Mugaay).

Kyle Waters-Sampson

Kyle is a 20-year-old Gomeroi man, originally from a small Community named Walhallow/Caroona mission, outside of Tamworth. Kyle's family moved to the Central Coast when he was 16 years old. Selling his first painting during high school, Kyle's art is now featured around the Central Coast, with his largest piece showcased at Gosford Hospital. Kyle paints his Dreaming and connections with Country using bright colours and images that reflect his own journey.



Acknowledgement of Country

The NSW Aboriginal Languages Trust acknowledges and pays respect to Aboriginal Peoples who are the custodians of Country. We acknowledge their unbroken connections to this place through Story, Kinship and Language, from time immemorial.

The Aboriginal Languages Gathering 2022 was held on Darkinjung Country. We would like to acknowledge and thank the Darkinjung Language Group and the Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council for welcoming us and allowing us to gather, share and learn on their Country.



About the Language Gathering

The Aboriginal Languages Trust held the second State-wide NSW Aboriginal Languages Gathering from 29th November to the 1st December 2022. The Languages Gathering was hosted by the Aboriginal Languages Trust for Aboriginal Language practitioners, teachers and knowledge holders from across NSW. The theme for the Gathering was 'Share, Learn and Grow', which acknowledged the breadth of Language knowledge held within the NSW Languages Community and the desire from Communities to share experiences and learnings with each other.

The Gathering provided the opportunity for connection and important sharing and discussion focused on the successes and challenges surrounding the reclamation and revitalisation of Aboriginal Languages in NSW. It further enabled important and continued discussions around the steps Communities are taking and need to take to grow and nurture their Languages to ensure their preservation and strength into the future.

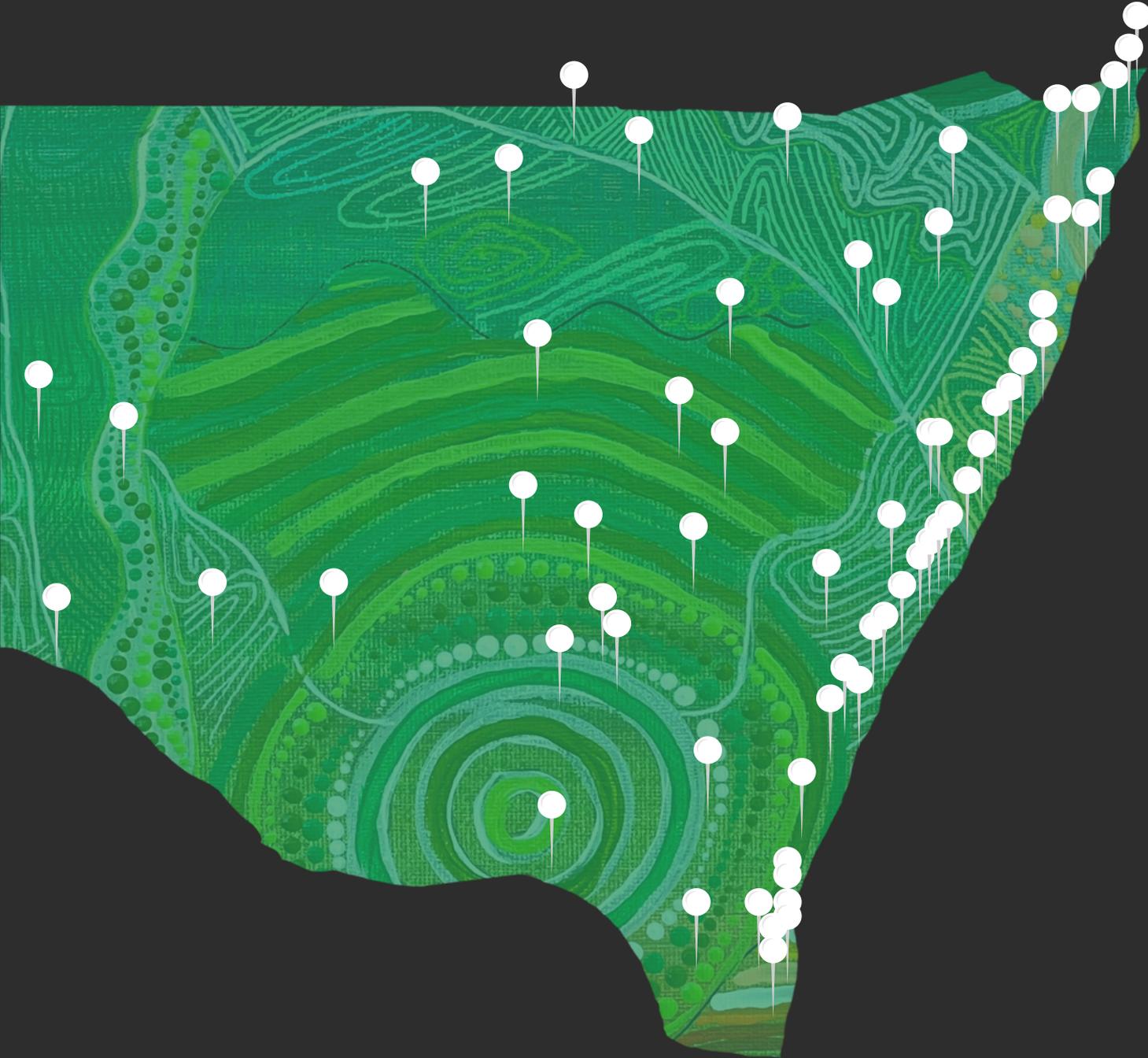


Aboriginal people should be aware that this report contains names, images and references to Aboriginal people who have passed.

Number of attendees:



Number of Languages represented:



Not to scale



Statement from the Aboriginal Languages Trust Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson





The 2022 NSW Aboriginal Languages Gathering brought together over 200 Language practitioners, educators, and Community members from across the State to share, learn and grow. It has been amazing to witness the growth of Aboriginal Languages since the Ngamaru Gathering in 2019 and the progress made by Communities all over the State.

We are uplifted by the breadth and depth of the Languages work being carried out by Communities throughout NSW and we are humbled by the passion of those individuals doing the work and their willingness to share their knowledge and learnings. The Gathering provided an opportunity to celebrate the contributions of our Elders who have worked tirelessly over the years to keep Languages alive. We look forward to continuing this recognition into the future.

The feedback and experiences that have been shared with us about the event have been resoundingly positive and has further highlighted the importance of Gatherings such as these. We are proud that the Gathering achieved what we set out to do in providing a space for Aboriginal people to come together to share, learn and grow Languages.

Sadly, on the last day of the Gathering there was a significant foodborne illness outbreak that impacted the health and wellbeing of many attendees. Our staff and Board members of the Trust mobilised in the hours and days immediately following the Gathering to make sure attendees were safe and receiving the care they needed. We also acknowledge the compassion shown by so many Gathering attendees who checked in on and looked after each other following the event. We are extremely grateful to the Central Coast Local Health District, Nunyarra Aboriginal Health Unit, the health workers at Gosford Hospital and the Emergency Department, and Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council, for the support and culturally appropriate care given in response to the incident.

On behalf of the Trust we extend our deepest gratitude and appreciation to the Languages work being undertaken in Communities across NSW and to all attendees of the Gathering, who gave their time, their knowledge, and their presence to safeguard NSW Aboriginal Languages for the future.

Jason Behrendt, Chairperson
Catherine Trindall, Deputy Chairperson



"Awesome. Intense. Content-filled. Really Black."

Day One

Reclamation

The State-wide NSW Aboriginal Languages Gathering opened with a warm Welcome to Country from Aunty Bronwyn Chambers of the Darkinjung Language Group, followed by Uncle Gavi Duncan from the Darkinjung Aboriginal Land Council.

A video of the Wargan crow story helped us to connect to Darkinjung Country, as did the talents of Darkinjung man, Jack Chambers, on the yidaki.



Rhonda Ashby, Maureen Sulter and Donna McLaren then addressed the audience, to remind us of the Elders and Language Practitioners who have gone before us in Language work, and the importance of bringing youth on the journey to follow, whilst making their own path in Language work.



Young people from Goochooga, Tamworth, Nowra and La Perouse joined the stage to speak about what Language means to them.

"We all know that Language gives us purpose, gives us identity and it gives us connection"



Yuwaalaraay storyteller and performer, Nardi Simpson, captivated us with her keynote address 'Sitting with my teacher: When Language Shows the Way'.

Guests got to know a bit about each other at the Yarning Session: Who's Your Mob, Where Are You From?

In the afternoon attendees had the option to attend a number of breakout sessions:

- Dr Raymond Kelly of Wollotuka Institute, University of Newcastle, spoke to us about 'The Art of Listening' and reminded us to keep "an ear in both camps".
- Kaleesha Morris gave a powerful presentation on 'Linguicide, Decolonisation & Sovereignty'.
- Liam Price shared his knowledge and experience of Language revitalisation in his own Walpiri speaking Community with "Language link-up: how Warlpiri can help to revitalise".



- Melissa Jackson of the NSW State Library gave us tips for 'Looking for Language' in archive collections.
- Rhonda Ashby & Diane McNaboe ran a women's session about 'Women in Language'

A group of people had the privilege of joining the DarkinJung Cultural Tour to visit places of cultural significance, including a rock engraving site where they learnt some of the stories of Darkinjung Country.

We also had the opportunity to learn or sharpen our skills in a series of hands on workshops:

- Gadhungal Murring and the Gulaga Dance group lead us through a dance workshop.
- Jesse Hodgetts of Wollotuka Institute, University of Newcastle showed us 'Guthi Mali - To Make a Song'.
- Micko Jarrett demonstrated the Language teaching method of Total Physical Response.
- Ngumpie Weaving had our hands moving in a weaving workshop.
- Sharon Edgar-Jones of Muurrbay Language and Culture Cooperative introduced us to Centre introduced us to 'Interlinear Glossing?! What is it and why would I use it?!'



At the end of a fantastic first day, a network dinner was held by the poolside. We were entertained by Jayden Kitchener-Waters and Jesse Hodgetts, Mandawuy Dutton, Uncle Ray Kelly and Michael Donovan who shared beautiful songs in and about Language and Country. The Ngiyampaa Hunting song, performed by Jayden and Jesse, enchanted the crowd, being the first time it had been performed in this contemporary way. The first of the Lifetime Contribution Awards was announced, recognising outstanding individuals who have dedicated their lives to Language, Culture and the advancement of their Communities (see page 14 for award recipients).



Day Two

Revitalisation

Day two of the Gathering gave guests even more opportunities to engage with and learn from each other.

The day kicked off with a panel session on the Language Revitalisation Journey, with Callum Clayton-Dixon (Nēwara Aboriginal Corporation), Priscilla Strasek (Gamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay/Yuwaalayaay Language Practitioner), Sharon Edgar-Jones (Wonnarua Community Linguist, Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Cooperative) and Nathan Brennan (Bularri Muurlay Nyanggan Aboriginal Corporation)



"The biggest highlight was catching up with Mob, learning from Mob and sharing with Mob"

discussing their experiences revitalising Languages in their own Communities, reminding us there is no 'one size fits all' when it comes to revitalisation.

Guests had the opportunity to share and learn from others during the Yarning Session: 'What does Language governance look like?', discussing Language leadership and sovereignty.



Dhaggana

Anaiwan
Nēwara Aboriginal Corporation

Ngayi

Paakantji
Warlpa Thompson

Widāo

Gammēya Dharawal
Joel Deaves, Drew Longbottom & Jacob Morris



Wednesday's keynote presentation was "Yolŋu Perspective - How our Different Languages Connect Us" by Gawura Wanambi, Joy Bulkanhawuy, Lynette Guyula and Emma Murphy from ARDS Aboriginal Corporation. The presenters shared their extensive knowledge of their work in Language, Culture and Education in North East Arnhem Land, and reinforced the connection between themselves, their Languages, Kinship and Country.

In the afternoon, guests had the choice of breakout sessions to best suit their Language interests and aspirations:



Using Aboriginal Pedagogy and Immersion to Teach Language with Donna McLaren



Sharing Ideas on Creating Resources For Community with Priscilla Strasek and Elizabeth Smith



Singing With Language with Nardi Simpson



ICIP & Gujaga's journey to economic sustainability with Ray Ingrey of Gujaga Foundation



Teaching Language through hand gestures with Rhonda Radley

Later that afternoon guests had the unique opportunity to attend a 'Language Taster' workshop in one of five Languages of NSW. We thank the following individuals and organisations for teaching us some of the Languages.

Here's how to say hello in the five Languages we learnt

Biderah Thurringka

Murruwarri
Tom Barker

Jinggeela

Bundjalung
Kris Cook



Gala Dinner



Wednesday night's Gala Dinner was an event not to be missed. The event was a celebration of Aboriginal Languages, music, poetry and... karaoke moves.



We thank Rob Waters for sharing his striking and wholehearted poetry, Thikkabilla Vibrations for their outstanding dance performance and Miiesha for her soulful tunes.



During the night, the Aboriginal Languages Trust celebrated Language champions from across the state with Lifetime Contribution to Language Awards. Read more about our award recipients on the next page.



"The gala night was definitely a highlight - being able to hear the stories and achievements of people both past and present and their past language stories."



Tongue Tied

Rob Waters

In the days when you came here,
transporting your forgettingness born from Story lost.
You said the sun would never set upon your empire,
Not knowing that your empire was born from heartache,
longing for a home that you could never find here.

For this is *Our Home*
It is where our old people spoke her languages
they spoke them honestly
they spoke the freely
they spoke them openly
they spoke them without fear.

And then you cut off our tongues and stapled our ears to station walls*

But we recorded your words, you said.
Put them down on paper, you said.
We placed them on the shelves, you said.
Locked away in the sandstone coffins that house the very bodies that spoke them...
We were left with a lifetime sentence of broken sentences
But yeah, "museum" sounds far more civilised

But now we no longer hide our words in cupboards,
We don't speak behind locked doors.
Because I'm not sure if you got the memo yet,
We don't need your permission to speak our languages any longer!

We have untied our own tongues
We can hear our old ones say that WE, are the manifestation of their wildest
dreams.

We. Are. Language!

A message to those ones who hold our words and the remains of our old ones in
those sandstone coffins, I have but one thing to say to you

neeyanee nya dhooralanhaṇa

We. Are. Coming!

* 40 pairs of ears from murdered Aboriginal people were nailed to the walls of Lawn Hill Station on Waanyi country. They were cut off the murdered bodies by the Station Owner and his Station Manager.



Award Recipients

“These awards are about us acknowledging our Language Elders and thanking them for making the way for us to follow”

Tribute to

Jay Davis

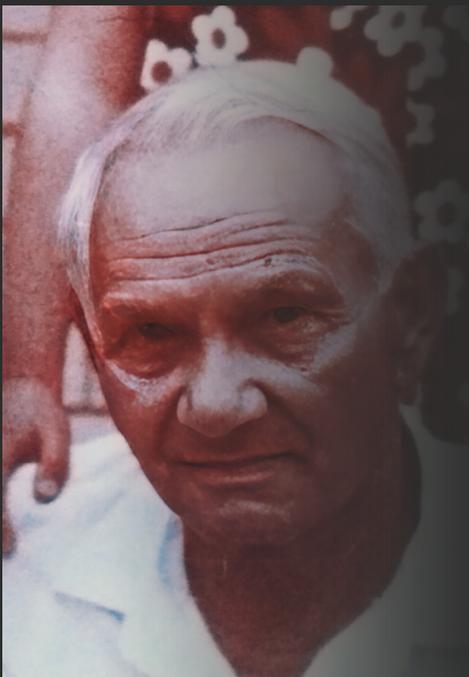
Jay Davis was a Biripi man who was deeply involved in the Biripi Community and was one of the founding members of the Gathang Language revitalisation movement. Jay contributed to the development of the Gathang dictionary, attending every Community meeting, reviewing the work of linguists and going through the research. Jay completed the first ever Gathang Cert I and went straight on to become a teacher of the following Gathang Cert I classes. He then completed the first ever Gathang Cert III program.

Jay worked to fund the Gathang Barrayga, Gathang on Country project, holding the first Gathang Language festival on Country at Saltwater Reserve in 2016. Jay joined other Aboriginal leaders for the introduction of the *Aboriginal Languages Act 2017*, singing in Language on the floor of NSW Parliament. Jay is remembered for his enthusiasm for Language, his musicianship and the legacy he leaves for the whole Gathang Community.

Honorary Award

Jimmie Barker

Jimmie Barker was a Murrawarri man born in Cunnamulla in 1900. He experimented with sound recording technology from a young age, and was the first Aboriginal person to record an Aboriginal Language. Jimmie used a Dictaphone purchased with his own money as the tool to record, preserve and document Aboriginal Culture and heritage. Throughout the 1920s, Jimmie not only recorded his own Language, but he also recorded speakers from some neighbouring Language Groups whilst living at Mundiwa Aboriginal Reserve, and later at Brewarrina Aboriginal Mission. Between 1968 and 1972, after over forty years of being denied the basic human right to practice one's Language and Culture, Jimmie once again started recording his Language. This period resulted in around 120 precious audio tape recordings of Jimmie speaking about Murrawarri Language and Culture, which remain crucial to the Community to this day.



Maureen Sulter

Aunty Maureen Sulter is a proud Gamilaraay Elder with lifelong service to her Community, including helping to establish the Coonabarabran Housing Company in 1974 and starting the Coonabarabran Local Aboriginal Land Council with her brother Aubrey Cain in 1983, where she continued her involvement as a member and board member until 2019.

Aunty Maureen trained as a teacher and taught Gamilaraay Language at Coonabarabran TAFE and High school between 2007 and 2014. She completed her Masters of Indigenous Language Education in 2012. Aunty Maureen was part of the Community Advisory Group which helped develop the *Aboriginal Languages Act 2017*, and when the act was introduced in Parliament, wore her headdress and possum skin cloak, and was the person to pass the Message Stick to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs at the end the ceremony.



Junette Mitchell

Aunty Junette Mitchell is the last fluent speaker of the Southern Paakantyi Language, first recorded by linguist Luise Hercus as 'Pooncarie Talk', it is the traditional dialect spoken in the area of Pooncarie and Mungo in the lower Darling River region, south west NSW. Aunty Junette and her siblings spent their early years growing up around Pooncarie on the banks of the Paaka (Darling River), speaking Language with their Mother Irene 'Reenie' Mitchell and Grandmother Maggie Brodie (nee Johnson). Through the selfless efforts of Aunty Junette and her siblings, Pooncarie Talk is being kept alive and well for future generations of the Mitchell mob and their extended families.



Beryl Carmichael

Aunty Beryl Carmichael is a Ngiyaampaa Elder from Menindee. For many years Aunty Beryl has been a strong advocate for the protection of Culture and Heritage and has worked to ensure that the Language and knowledge of her people continues to be passed down from generation to generation. She holds an Honorary Doctorate from Tranby Aboriginal College and is a lifetime associate member of the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, having held the position of Aboriginal Language Support Officer, advising the New South Wales Board of Studies. In 2004 she was awarded the NSW Department of Education and Training's Meritorious Service to Public Education Award.



She has also been awarded a Centenary of Federation Medal for devotion to Cultural awareness and contribution to Australian society. Aunty Beryl designed a camp called Ngallia Norta Norta Killara, meaning "All learning together", and in 1995 bought Elders from NSW and Queensland together on her home Country in Menindee. Aunty Beryl is quoted as saying "Language is the soul of this Nation. Everything is connected and Language is the way we find those connections."



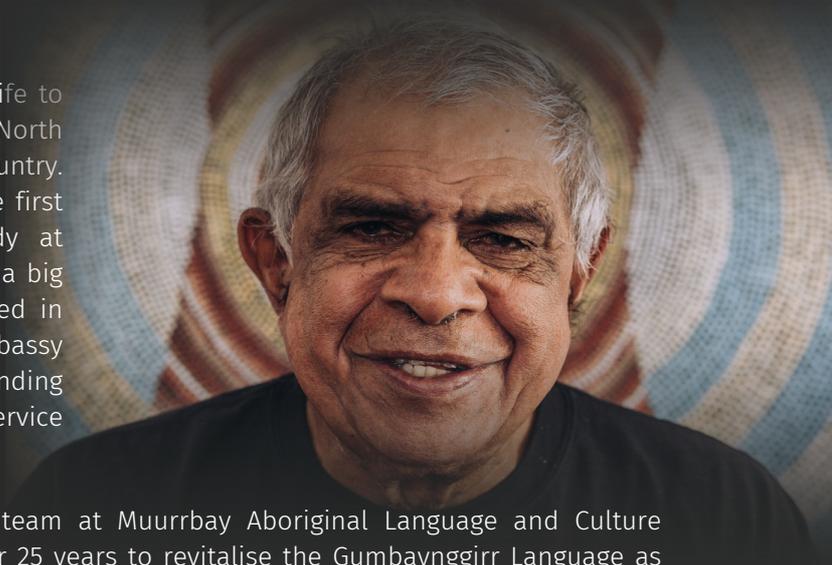
Stan Grant

Dr Stanley 'Stan' Grant Senior AM is an Elder and a warrior of the Wiradjuri people from south-west NSW. Dr Grant grew up in Griffith, NSW and spent time with his grandfather Wilfred Johnson (known as Budyaaan) who spoke seven Languages and taught Dr Grant the Wiradjuri language. Uncle Stan, his brother, the late Pastor Cec Grant OAM, and Dr John Rudder have been crucial to the reconstruction of the Wiradjuri Language, travelling and re-teaching their Language from a small base of anthropological records, rebuilding the spoken and sung Language for urban and rural community members.

Their collaboration for more than three decades has seen the production of many resources, including a dictionary, children's books, song books, university texts and the Charles Sturt University Wiradjuri Language, Culture and Heritage Program. Through Dr Grant's efforts, Wiradjuri is a living, changing Language and people who are here today speaking this Language are directly connected to the people who have spoken this Language for thousands of years.

Gary Williams

Uncle Gary Williams has dedicated most of his life to the advancement of Goori People, not just North Coast People but for mobs right across the Country. In 1963, Uncle Gary and Charlie Perkins were the first two Aboriginal men to be admitted to study at Sydney University. In 1964 and 1965 Gary played a big part in the Freedom Rides. He was also involved in the establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy with his cousin Gary Foley. He was also a founding member of both the Redfern Aboriginal Legal Service and the Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service.



Uncle Gary has been an integral part of the team at Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Cooperative team, where he has worked for over 25 years to revitalise the Gumbaynggirr Language as well as support seven different Language Groups along the east coast with their revitalisation work. Some have described Uncle Gary as the embodiment of a quiet humility, who like all our Old People, walks softly. He is a vital pillar to his Community and a beacon of Cultural knowledge, ensuring the transmission of knowledge is protected for many future generations to come.

Poppy Harry Walker-Mundine



Uncle Poppy Harry Walker is a Wahluwal man who grew up learning Language and Culture from his family, particularly his Uncle Eric Walker. Harry is a father of eight children and many grandchildren and in 1991, he became an ordained minister. Harry has been heavily involved with the Tabulam Public School, sharing Language and Cultural knowledge. Harry is passionate about protecting his Language for his Community and ensuring that the Language he teaches is treasured by everyone who learns it. In 2011 Harry worked with Muurrbay to produce a set of six DVD resources focused on the Language, Culture, stories and history of the Tabulam area. Today he continues to teach Language in the school to the children of his Community with Aunty Carmel, Jai Walker and Ryan Walker. He is currently producing Language sentence videos as Language resources for the Tabulam children.



"Overwhelming in a good way. Mob are saying it's the deadliest confrence they have been to"

Day Three

Nurture and Grow

The final day of the Gathering kicked off with Clark Webb, Troy Robinson and Ellie Buchanan of the Gumbaynggirr Giingana Freedom School sharing their experiences in launching the first Aboriginal Language bilingual school in NSW.



Neville Boney, a proud Wiradjuri man and graduate of NAISDA Dance College performed a breathtaking piece entitled Yuwinbarra. Through dance, music and Language, Yuwinbarra was an expression of gratitude to Country our mother, who shows the way of nurturing our children.



Later we heard from four Language Practitioners about their connection between their Language and Country (Warren Foster, Kaleesha Morris, Rhonda Ashby & Warlpa Thompson).



Callum Clayton-Dixon & Larissa Ahoy from Nēwara Aboriginal Corporation gave a presentation on their work to revive Anaiwan Language and how they have acquired land on Country for Language teaching and learning.



After three engrossing and emotional days, we were farewelled through a special performance from the students of Darkinjung Barker College.

What's Next?

Every person who completed our post-event survey said they would come to the next Languages Gathering. After such a fantastic reception for the 2022 Gathering, the Aboriginal Languages Trust has committed to running the event every two years.

- While we received lots of extremely positive feedback, we also listened to ideas and recommendations about things we should do differently next time.
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“To walk and listen to Country and hear the Language and stories on Country.”

“More time for the Yarning circles to enable more discussion around the questions.”

“There were several afternoon sessions that I wanted to attend that were on the same time.”

“More sharing resources”

“Some side events for young people. A youth component if possible”

Until the next Gathering, the Trust has an ambitious [Strategic Plan](#) to deliver on, including many initiatives designed to directly support NSW Aboriginal Language Communities on their revitalisation journeys.

“So grateful for the opportunity to be part of this Gathering. I have learned so much and gained a lot of confidence in what I do and also what I am trying to achieve with my students (and with myself) in the future.”

“Words are hard to find to explain how important I have found this event. It has provided knowledge, healing, connection for many. I feel extremely privileged to have been invited and to be part of this journey. I hope this event will continue each year to strengthen our connections and growth in Language.”



Thank you to

all our amazing speakers and presenters... we are in awe of you all.

Amanaki Studios for their skilled videography and filming work.

Joseph Mayers Photography for all the powerful and heartwarming images from the event.

Rachel Dight from Swivel for our live scribe artwork.

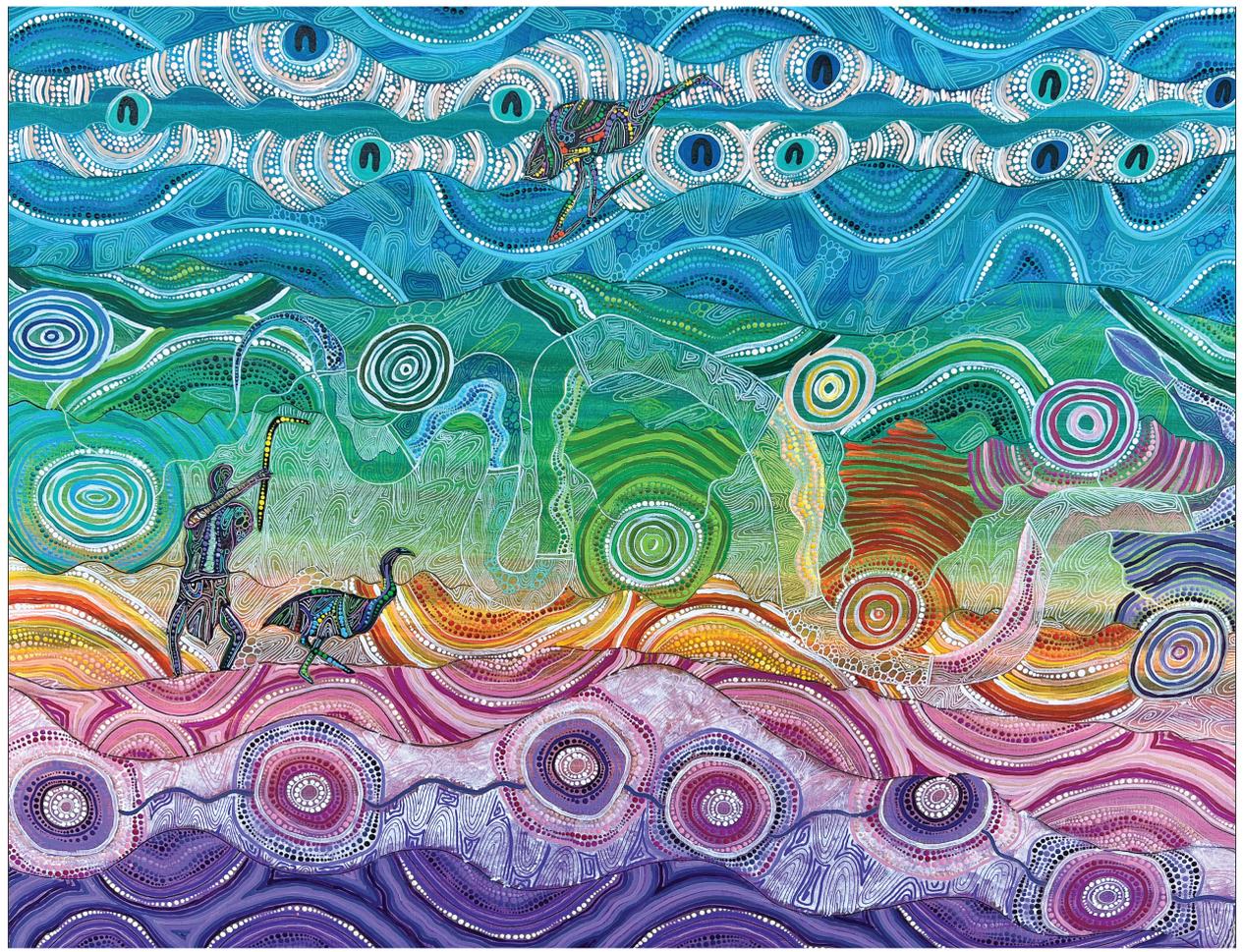
The Aboriginal Languages Trust Board for their ongoing leadership and guidance.

All the Aboriginal Languages Trust staff who worked hard to make the event happen, and ensure it ran smoothly.



**Aboriginal Languages
Trust**





Dhinawan'gu Garay (Emu's Words)

Our lands and mountains are continuously growing and connecting with each other (purple and pink dot and wave lines), and our People are connected through the identity we have in Country (purple and pink circles connected). I pay respect to my own Country, Gomeri Country, our waterholes and rivers (in green). I pay respect to the Sun (orange) and to Waaway the Rainbow Serpent, who connect all People, Animals and Countries. I pay respect to our shared Dreaming (in blue), the stars of Mooki (Mugaay) the Milky Way (white dots) and our Ancestors (circles within circles). Our Languages hold all of this and connect us all (many different coloured lines, many Languages). I pay respect to the old Dhinawan Aunt, teaching the nephew Language of his Country and the Dreaming of his Ancestors in the Mooki (Mugaay).