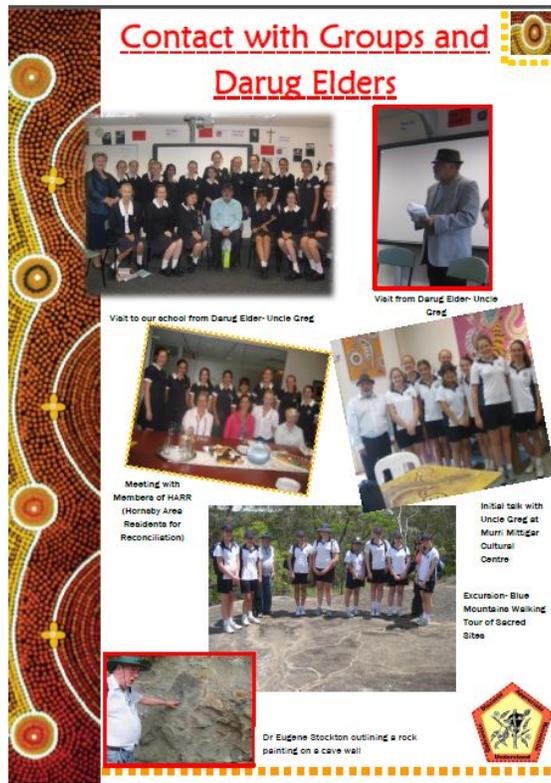


# D.A.R.U.G. Project



## CmPS Team - Evolving Project - Middle Division

## **PREFACE FOR EVOLVING PROJECTS**

**Current Project Title:** Discover Acknowledge Reconcile Understand Galvanise (D.A.R.U.G)

**Previous Title:** Discover Acknowledge Recognise Understand Galvanise (D.A.R.U.G)

We believed that there was a distinct need to extend our project because the school community had not yet fully realised the connection we held with the Darug people and our shared heritage. We also believed it was necessary to begin reconciliation with them and to increase the presence of Darug elders and culture in our everyday schooling life.

### **Previous Underlying Problem:**

As our school lies on Darug land, we believe that it is important to acknowledge and appreciate the Darug culture. They form a large part of our history, culture and spirituality and we believe educating our community is essential to continue their heritage. How might we educate the wider MSB community on the Darug traditions and way of life so that we can maintain the connections with the traditional custodians of our land?

### **Current Underlying Problem:**

During the 2012-2013 school years, in the MSB year of stewardship, the DARUG Team has been inspired to strengthen our connections and reconcile with the Darug people, who are the traditional custodians of the land our school resides on. How might we reconcile with the Darug peoples so that we can strengthen our relationships and make the Darug peoples a larger part of our school community?

### **Summary of Previous Action Plan:**

Our previous action plan focussed on increasing awareness of the Darug people and educating the school community about some of the basic beliefs and cultures held by them.

### **Summary of Current Action Plan:**

Our current action plan has evolved to encompass reconciliation with the Darug people, acknowledgement of our shared heritage and increasing connections with Darug elders and culture within our school.

### **Additional Information:**

The Darug people are the traditional Indigenous Aboriginal custodians of the land on which our school resides. They have a rich culture and as one of the oldest civilisations in the world have lived on the land for up to 60 000 years. Their core beliefs involve living as one with the land and only taking from it what is necessary for survival. However, due to colonisation by Europeans in the late 1700s the Aboriginal people were forced off their land and sacred sites, massacred and dehumanised. Even now there is a large cultural gap between Indigenous Australians and other citizens, with many Aboriginals still harbouring resentment about the wrongs conducted towards them. In 2009 in the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's 'Sorry speech' a formal apology was sent out to all Aboriginals, however we believe that in order to fully obtain reconciliation, peace and equality it is necessary for things to be done at not only a federal and state level but also at a local level. Actions must also target our younger generation and allow them to understand the importance of reconciliation so that we may have a cohesive and inclusive Australian community in the future.

## Area of Concern

From our initial whole school survey conducted in 2012, we discovered that the MSB and wider community have a significant lack of knowledge about the Darug people's culture. Whilst 86% of students feel it is important to acknowledge the Darug culture, over 50%<sup>1</sup> do not realise they live on Darug land and are not aware of any Darug dreamtime stories. From these statistics we concluded that the Darug culture is being forgotten. The Darug people are the traditional Australian Aboriginal group that first resided on the land where our school is located. As a result, our generation is suffering from a disconnection with the Darug people and their rich culture. Since the inception of our project we have moved away from simply education and recognition. We now believe that more steps need to be taken towards reconciliation. This is important because in order to close the cultural gap between the Darug nation and present society we need to recognise past wrongs and move forward to being an inclusive and cohesive community. Without embracing our shared heritage, our local identity will be diminished. It is important that these connections and consultations with the Darug Elders are maintained, because "music sounds better when playing both the black and white keys."<sup>2</sup> Despite the work of organisations like Hornsby Area Residents for Reconciliation (HARR), Darug Tribal Aboriginal Corporation<sup>3</sup> and the Darug Information and Research Centre in Seven Hills, NSW<sup>4</sup> having taken steps towards reconciliation, students in our school are not engaged in these steps. Our involvement is necessary for these young people to become interested and aware, which we can achieve through our links with our peers and other young people.

## Challenges Identified

The community experiences many challenges in regards to reconciling with the Darug nation. The first challenge is learning about the traditional culture, as there are not many resources within the community that are readily available for all members. This means that people do not properly understand the culture and hardships and therefore, cannot fully reconcile with the peoples. As a group we are challenged to be aware of Darug protocol so that our actions are respecting the Darug culture and elders past and present. Our school and society are also challenged to grasp the Aboriginal perspective and look at reconciliation in their eyes. It is vital for us to talk to many Indigenous elders into order to gain a perspective of their wider experience and feelings towards the land.

Though many may recognise the Darug people, a significant challenge faced by our local community is how to engage everyone within our shared community. The Federal government is taking steps to recognise Indigenous Australians in the preamble of the Australian Constitution and the official apology to the Stolen Generation in 2007. However the challenge is how we everyone in the community embrace Indigenous Australian culture. We are challenged to work towards maintaining our shared heritage at a local level, where change really happens.

Our school community consists of young people who, in the future, will be the elders of the community. We are challenged to engage ourselves in the work of organisations run by adults, and these organisations are challenged to involve us young people also. This is due to a generation gap between us, as we communicate in different ways and through different mediums.

In addition, we are furthermore challenged to close the cultural gap that exists between the Darug people and the rest of society. The Darug people have a different sense of spirituality and Dreaming and it is often challenging to integrate this into society, as the values differ.

Our school community is challenged to continue the legacy of our project so that this significant and vital work is not stopped when our group graduates in two years. Without the implementation of our project, our school community would have continued to become further culturally disconnected

<sup>1</sup> 51% don't know if they live on Darug land, 14% erroneously said they don't live on Darug land.

<sup>2</sup> Darug Elder Uncle Greg

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.darug.org.au/DarugW.html>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.blacktownsun.com.au/news/local/news/general/dig-all-the-info-about-the-darug/1826383.aspx>

with the Darug people. Now that they are aware and we are on the road to reconciliation, it is important to continue to build on the fundamentals we have established. It is a challenge to acknowledge that reconciliation is not an overnight accomplishment.

### **Underlying Problem**

During the 2012-2013 school years, in the MSB year of stewardship, the DARUG Team has been inspired to strengthen our connections and reconcile with the Darug people, who are the traditional custodians of the land our school resides on. How might we reconcile with the Darug peoples so that we can strengthen our relationships and make the Darug peoples a larger part of our school community?

### **Alternative Solutions and Ideas**

Initially we aimed to educate the MSB community on the Darug culture, traditions and ways of life. As our project evolved, however, we discovered that our aims had changed. We now began to focus more on reconciliation with the Darug people and increasing their presence in our school community. To do this we thought about;

- Initiating contact with a Darug elder (Uncle Greg) so he was able to teach us about Darug traditions
- Inviting Uncle Greg to visit our school and discuss some parts of the Aboriginal culture with us
- Having the Hornsby Area Residents for Reconciliation group visit us to discuss their views on reconciliation and gain some insight into the work they have done.
- Visiting traditional Darug sites with Dr Eugene Stockton so we could better understand some of their sacred areas and the traditional rituals that occurred there.
- Visiting two local primary schools (St Agatha's and Dural Public School) that also reside on Darug land to educate the students about the importance of reconciliation and respect for the Darug peoples.
- Renaming each of the school's buildings with a word from the Darug language.
- Creating a Darug bush tucker garden where students are able to experience some tradition foods of the Darug people.
- Creating a traditional bush remedy book with the help of Darug elders.
- Reclaiming the Hall Courtyard with its rightful name of the Darug Courtyard to increase awareness of the presence of the Darug culture in the school's everyday life.
- Holding an art exhibition where members of the public would be invited to view Darug artworks created by elders and speak with the elders who made them.
- Writing an article for local newspapers the 'Hornsby Advocate' and the 'Hills Shire Times.'
- Displaying our project and information about the Darug culture in a room as part of our 2013 Open Day tour, to allow potential students and community members to acknowledge our school's connection with the Darug people.
- Creating a resource package for the History faculty and changing the course 'History of MSB Site Study' to incorporate the school's history of being on Darug land.

All of these solutions would have been extremely useful and very beneficial when attempting to solve our underlying problem. Some, however, were unrealistic and so we decided against implementing them. Although there is still a long way to go before true reconciliation becomes a reality we believe we will make a valuable step in educating our school on the importance of reconciling and maintaining our connections with the Darug people through the use of those solution ideas we do employ.

## Plan of action

Prior to Nationals last year, we introduced our project to the school through methods such as speeches at assembly, creating a logo, bookmark, posters, made a Claymation video, planned Darug Week, created a resource package for Religion classes and created a picture book adaption of a Darug Dreamtime story.

### Term 4 – 2012 (October – November)

- Conduct a second survey to see how far we have come in our project.
- Speak at a whole school assembly to summarise this year's work and to introduce our ideas for the following years.
- Walking tour in the Blue Mountains of Darug sacred sites
- Meet with a Darug Elder and discuss Darug culture and traditions as well as our project.
- Hold a Darug week where we involve the school community in celebrating to Darug culture and our shared heritage.
- Appear in local newspapers the 'Hornsby Advocate' and the 'Hills Shire Times.'
- Continue posting discussion points and questions on our Facebook page to interact with a broader range of people. This will be continued throughout this year and next year.

### Term 1 – 2013 (February – April)

- Organise a Darug Elder to come to school and talk to a group of students and staff about his culture and traditional ways
- Visit two local primary schools on Darug land to share our knowledge of the Darug people and the importance of our shared heritage and reconciliation. Leave other resource packages so the primary schools can continue to educate students in the future.
- Organise for our school to become a member of HARR to pledge our commitment to reconciliation
- Present a package to the history faculty that proposes to alter the Year 7 History course to include a site study of the Darug people as original custodians of the land our school is situated on.
- Participate in the College Open Day by creating a room for our project where members of the community can come and participate in educational activities and learn about our shared heritage.
- Meet with Hornsby Area Resident for Reconciliation to discuss ideas and current mutual goals for reconciliation (proposed date – 14<sup>th</sup> March)
- Acknowledge the Darug people at a school assembly and pledge our commitment to the ideas of strengthening our connections with the Darug people and further explain the significance of the acknowledgement of country.
- Write an article in the college newsletter outlining our project and our aims, as well as insert a link to our Facebook page, should anyone want to know more.

### Term 2 – 2013 (May – July)

- Reclaim the Darug courtyard in our school to remind people of its original name as a constant reminder of the connection the Darug people have with our school. This will be done during reconciliation week.

- Update the school on our current plans for the project and how they can get involved as well as highlight some of our achievements from the past term.
- Hold an art exhibition at school where the community can view artworks by Darug people and interact with Darug elders that we invite to attend.
- Send out resource packages to local primary schools we have not visited so they are also able to learn about the Darug culture and the importance of reconciliation.
- Get our school to join the HARR (Hornsby Area Resident for Reconciliation) organisation.

### **Actions and Outcomes to Date**

Term 4 -2012 (October – November)

Speaking at a whole school assembly allowed us to summarise the progress of phase one and introduce our plans for phase two. A walking tour of the Darug sacred sites in Blue Mountains with Dr Eugene Stockton broadened our understanding of the importance of respecting and acknowledging these sites and the cultural connections the Darug people feel towards these sites. A meeting with Uncle Greg, a Darug Elder, guided us on our aims for the project and protocols to follow as well as informing us on the Darug culture and Dreaming Stories. Darug Week, held at school, was a wrap up of the education and involvement of the community where we received feedback before starting on our new focus of reconciling and strengthening our relationships with the Darug Peoples. We also continued to post discussion points and questions on our Facebook page which strengthened interactions between subscribers, our project and the Darug culture and increased their awareness of the need to reconcile.

Term 1- 2013 (February – April)

We organised for a Darug elder to come on the 5<sup>th</sup> April to speak to a group of students from all year groups and members of staff which caused the further education of the community and also to strengthen our connections with the Darug people, leading to more involvement of the school in reconciliation. We provided the history department with a package to include the Darug people in a year 7 MSB site study, creating long lasting connections between the school and the heritage of the land. We participated in our College Open Day with interactive displays and activities to raise awareness of our project in the wider community. We also met with the organisation, Hornsby Area Residents for Reconciliation (HARR) to discuss our project ideas and to further develop an understanding of the importance of reconciliation with the Darug Peoples. We acknowledged the Darug peoples as the traditional custodians of the land our school resides on at a whole school assembly to pledge our commitment to reconciliation with the Darug peoples and to strengthen the ties of the school with the heritage of the land. Finally, we wrote an article for the college newsletter which further informed the school community of our project aims and provided a link to our Facebook page to access extra information. Our actions resulted in our school having a permanent reminder and acknowledgement of the Darug people and our shared heritage on the school website.

### **Organisation**

We evenly distributed jobs to all team members so everyone could use their special talents to the team's advantage. Meetings start with a communal discussion of each groups' progress before continuing work. Originally, we met Tuesday lunchtimes, but we increased this to thrice a week. We also completed work individually in our own time.

Communication Group – Rebecca, Monique, Laura

This team communicated with staff, the principal, Darug elders and HARR about our project, wrote excursion proposals and permission requests for the College executive. Communicated with school in

assemblies and daily notices etc. Received a Message stick from Uncle Greg giving us permission to continue our attempts at reconciliation and connecting our separate communities and cultures.

Research Group – Julia, Stephanie, Rebecca, Emily-Kate  
Researched Darug culture and educated the rest of the team.

Education Group – Emily-Kate, Laura, Monique  
Created packages for faculties and schools and organised Darug Week.

Creative Media – Rebecca, Julia  
Created multimedia posters, videos and bookmarks, a Facebook page and a Darug Dreamtime story book.

### Report Writing

Team members completed one section of the report individually or in a pair. Work was then sent to team members to be approved and edited to ensure each members input.

### **Resource Identification and Utilisation**

One resource that assisted us in our project was interactions with people such as the Darug Elder, Uncle Greg. He gave us valuable advice on protocols in order to respect the ancient culture of the Darug Peoples. He also informed us on important traditions and dreaming stories relevant to the Darug culture. Another valuable resource was Dr Eugene Stockton who took us on a tour of the sacred sites of the Darug people around the fringes of the Blue Mountains. He provided us with some much appreciated knowledge on the importance of these sacred sites. A meeting with the organisation Hornsby Area Residents for Reconciliation (HARR) allowed us to discuss similarities in our projects and assist us in establishing our aims for reconciliation with the Darug people.

Printed resources that we have utilised include '*Aboriginal Australia, A Traditional Culture in an Organic World*' by Wayne Kelly, '*Guyunggu Teacher's Notes*' by Coral Oomera Edwards and Lisa Buxton and '*The Darug and their Neighbours*', '*The Traditional Aboriginal Owners of the Sydney Region*' by James Kohen. These resources informed us on the Darug culture and ways of life which enabled us to broaden our knowledge. The true stories in '*Still Standing*' by Annette Salt, offered us an understanding of the hardships the Darug people have encountered in experiencing the removal from their land which inspired us to strengthen our relationships with the Darug Peoples. The '*Issues in Society Towards Reconciliation Volume 140*' by Justin Healey also assisted us to further understand the meaning of reconciliation in order for us to take action and reconcile with the Darug Peoples. '*The Blue Mountains Dreaming*', '*The Aboriginal Heritage (second edition)*' by Eugene Stockton and John Merriman, informed us on the abundance of sacred sites of the Darug people and the true meaning behind these sites.

All these resources were greatly appreciated and helped us to implement this new found knowledge into our project.

### **Accomplishments:**

Throughout 2012 and 2013, project DARUG has made significant progress. We have successfully increased the College's understanding and knowledge of the Darug culture. A Facebook page was created under the name of our project to reach out to wider community, so we can provide information and awareness beyond our immediate College community. This page, as of March 2013, has gained over 100 likes. Via this Facebook page we have come in contact with a number of people who are interested in our project, some of which were Darug people and aboriginal organisations.

One of the main ways of educating our school community was through Darug week which was held in November 2012. Many activities were organised for the whole school to participate in such as painting and traditional Darug games to further educate the College about their traditions and way of life.

We also went on an excursion to visit sacred Darug sites in the Katoomba area led by Dr Eugene Stockton, an archaeologist who studies Darug sites and culture. These sacred sites that we saw held stories of the Darug culture and history which helped us to further grasp the connection we have with them. We saw many rock engravings, which have significant meaning to the Darug people, and met with a Darug elder, Uncle Greg, who shared with us his stories and experiences. We now make contact with him frequently and he visited our school on April 5<sup>th</sup> and shared with our College community some Darug history and dreamtime stories. At this gathering our team also had the privilege of receiving a Message Stick presented to us by Uncle Greg, showing we are taking a significant step forward towards our goal of reconciliation. Our team project was also acknowledged by the Governor of New South Wales, Marie Bashir, who praised our accomplishments in front of our College community at Presentation Day 2012.

Additionally, we have created a school resource package for the History department of our College. This resource has now been included in the College curriculum and has been made into a site study for the Year 7 students to research each year. This package includes key vocabulary, useful websites, source analysis questions, information on our shared heritage and reconciliation, Darug dreamtime stories, stories of the Darug people and comprehension questions to match. To further promote and educate our wider community we set up a room for our Darug project on our College open day. We had many people approach us, inquire about our project and commend us on our accomplishments. Many people were very interested in our findings in our project and agreed that reconciliation was a significant issue in our community that needed to be improved.

Two members of our team presented an extended acknowledgement of country at one of our whole school assemblies. This was important to us and our goals as a team as this was where our original project stemmed from. This shows that we have developed from just an address to the owners of the land, to a recognition and full acknowledgement that the land we stand on is shared with this Indigenous culture.

Finally, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March our team met with Hornsby Area Residents for Reconciliation (HARR) who were interested and supportive on our project as they too were working towards similar goals as us. We shared knowledge with them and gained a better understanding of the great importance of the recognition and the reconciliation with the Darug culture.

## **Reflection on Outcomes**

*"Two steps forward, one step back, but at least there is a step"* – HARR (Hornsby Area Residents for Reconciliation)

The above statement reflects our project and the long-term road to reconciliation. Throughout our evolved project, our team has gained valuable knowledge about the rich Darug culture and Dreaming which we have been able to share with our community. This has made our school community feel connected with the Darug people and when an acknowledgement is said at assembly it becomes more than just words.

Without each member of the team, we become less organised as when we collaborate we are able to work effectively to achieve goals and overcome obstacles. Furthermore, each one of us has their own special roles and gifts to bring to the team and our project's success has largely been due to using our talents wisely and our teamwork skills.

One of the large ways we have received community input is through our Facebook page. This has enabled us to broaden our project's scope and society members, both locally and Australia wide have liked and commented on our Darug page illustrating their appreciation and enthusiasm for what we have been achieving. This use of technology has proved to be a successful tool to reach the wider community and connect with young people especially in the community. We have also received feedback from HARR members who said "It is so great to see young people interested in reconciliation. You are the leaders of tomorrow and it is up to you to continue the Darug people's legacy". These women are involved within the organisation and are very familiar and passionate about reconciling and connecting with Aboriginal people so getting this type of response from them is reassuring. Joining our school to the HARR organisation would be extremely worthwhile as it would mean having a constant connection with people working for similar goals to us. Finally, a sign of our project's impact has been evident in being approached by our school to incorporate the Darug heritage and acknowledgement onto our school website for all to see.

Our action plan helped us to achieve our goals as it enabled us to define the different stages of our project and therefore help solve our underlying problem.

We believe that the angle we have taken as our project has evolved, focussing on maintaining our shared heritage and reconciling with the Darug people, has been extremely beneficial because it is no use simply being educated if you do not appreciate or recognise that the Darug people's significance to the land.

Our group has really enjoyed our project as we believe that it is extremely worthwhile which is why we have been able to bring so much passion and enthusiasm for our underlying problem.

Reconciliation takes time, so our project's aims will never be fully achieved but we believe that we have been successful in beginning the reconciliation journey with the Darug people. "You can't grow as a nation until you have moved on from the past" – HARR