CHAPTER 4

DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR INDIGENOUS LEARNING SPACES

In this chapter we apply what we have learned from international theory and research to what we observed in the various learning spaces and what Indigenous young people shared with us.

Though we want to emphasise again that we don't believe a single replicable model is possible—or desirable—we have identified what we believe are a series of design principles that can be of value in building or facilitating learning spaces:

- Design Principle 1:
  A space young people control
- Design Principle 2:
  A space for hanging out and 'mucking around'
- Design Principle 3:
  A space where learners learn
- Design Principle 4:
  A space to grow into new roles and responsibilities
- Design Principle 5:
  A space to practice oral and written language
- Design Principle 6:
  A space to express self and cultural identity through multimodal forms
- Design Principle 7:
  A space to develop and engage in enterprise
- Design Principle 8:
  A space to engage with the world

ARNHEM LAND BILLABONG PHOTO: YOUTH LEARNING PROJECT

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 1:
A SPACE YOUNG PEOPLE CONTROL

In most remote Indigenous communities 'learning' is typically controlled by institutions: the school, a training provider or a workplace. Some great individual teachers notwithstanding, these institutions almost invariably assume a deficit perspective, where Aboriginal people are seen to be lacking not only in skill but also interest and commitment, never meeting national benchmarks or achieving mainstream standards of employment participation. Within these institutions new non-Indigenous teachers and trainers come and go with numbing regularity, arriving and departing with low expectations of Indigenous educational capacity and engagement. The outcome of all this is predictable. In most communities and small townships with a large Indigenous population, adolescents are early school-leavers or are not attending regularly, and many struggle to make the transition from school to work.

Most Aboriginal people who live in remote communities (and in towns) are painfully familiar with racism and discrimination, and the sense of disempowerment and marginalisation that accompany them. Even those who remain in their home communities have firsthand experience of the incremental erosion of personal control over many aspects of everyday life. New policies and systems associated with welfare benefits, education and local government are often framed as returning responsibility to Indigenous people and communities, but many are punitive (for example, linking welfare payments to school attendance) and ineffective.

There are few spaces in the public domain where Aboriginal people experience a sense of control. If they venture into towns a subtle yet pervasive racism precludes them from comfortably accessing public facilities like banks, cafes, and even the public swimming pool. In many communities—and even towns—there are few public access spaces where Aboriginal people can engage in informal personal, recreational, functional or informational reading and writing activities. This is mirrored in the domestic domain. In many homes books, pens, paper, children's educational resources or computers—all the resources taken for granted in the literate middle class domestic environment—are not readily available.

It is well known that access to resources engenders the kind of home literacy practices that are the antecedents to successful literacy learning at school (Teale and Sulzby 1986; Wells 1985).

In middle class literate homes children (and adolescents) are socialised into particular types of language and literacy practices (Duff and Hornberger 2008). They observe their elders reading, writing and undertaking the administration of everyday life, as well as engaging in talk around text. Children from such homes are therefore more likely to absorb literacy as a taken-for-granted practice and continue to use reading and writing in the post-school years:

> Children who learn to read successfully do so because, for them, learning to read is a cultural and not primarily an instructed process. Furthermore, this cultural process has long roots at home—roots which have grown strong and firm before the child has walked into school. Children who must learn reading primarily as an instructed process in school are at an acute disadvantage. (Gee 2004: 13)

Access to resources and a space that is conducive to the enactment of literacy practices is therefore a critical yet virtually unrecognised factor in the education debate in remote Indigenous Australia. In the remote context where Aboriginal people feel marginalised in the public domain and have minimal access to literacy resources at home, community-based organisations like youth programs, libraries, arts projects and media centres play a critical role in providing a space where resources for alphabetic *and* digital literacy development and independent learning can be accessed.

So the short films we make with them we put on DVD and give back to every participant so they can watch them at home on a DVD player. Computer access seems really hard, like communities I've been to we tend to go in school holidays and we say "Have you got a computer?" and they say "There's some at school but they're locked up in the schoolroom." Obviously you've got to keep them safe, except Docker River there's one computer sort of in a cage in the rec hall so supervised people can go and use that. In terms of what other young people in the country have got with the computers at school and stuff it's really limited.

DANI POWELL
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
NGAPARTJI NGAPARTJI, 2008

People do appreciate that things at the Youth Centre get looked after. Like people have had laptops, but they've lasted like a week and they bring it down to you and it's broken. But people know that they can always use a computer at the Youth Centre and that it's looked after and that it's for everyone...And people will often leave stuff at the Youth Centre on the basis of knowing that it will stay safe there.

AMY HARDIE
YOUTH WORKER
WILLOWRA YOUTH CENTRE, 2009

Importantly, these are sites where Aboriginal people, especially young people, feel a sense of spatial control. It is in these locations that young adults not only have access to resources that enable, as we discuss below, 'learning by mucking around', but also input from mentor experts to expand the development of specialised expertise.

Community-based organisations provide a location where people feel supported and systems and procedures become more transparent. Dani Powell from Ngapartji Ngapartji suggests that the core of community-based organisations like Big hART is that youth participants experience 'agency':

> ...to feel that you don't always have to be like that [marginalised] and you know how to move into that other world with confidence. And it doesn't mean you become an actor like Trevor [Jamieson], but it means if someone says "We can't go in there, that shop or whatever", you go "Yes we can, we'll go in, I know how it works".

The strong message that the youth performers who toured to capital cities with the *Ngapartji Ngapartji* show imbibed was that they were respected by non-Aboriginal people in a manner rarely experienced in Alice Springs. As Director Scott Rankin noted: "When they come to Sydney people want to talk to them, they are like stars."

YOUNG PEOPLE LEARNING NEW SKILLS AT GHUNMARN CULTURE CENTRE, WUGULARR, 2008
PHOTO: YOUTH LEARNING PROJECT

I try and expose young people to everything I'm doing. So if I have forms, like money forms that people have to sign I make it really simple so they can read it and sign it. Or I show them how other people did that, or I'm writing out the timetable. I make a big schedule and I always look at it myself and I noticed that one young woman was getting curious "What's that?" she'd ask. And I went "Why don't I make you one, here it is and let's go through it". She was desperate to know: "What are we doing tomorrow?" ...It's that stuff you need to know to feel more access and control, not people have got the knowledge and they're not going to tell me. It's a sort of moving outside passivity, being moved around, but if I know what's going on I can start to plan and manage my own time here.

DANI POWELL
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
NGAPARTJI NGAPARTJI, 2008

***NGAPARTJI NGAPARTJI* THEATRE PERFORMANCE, BELINDA O'TOOLE AND ELTON WIRRI WITH ELDERS**
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SCENARIO
NGAPARTJI NGAPARTJI THEATRE PERFORMANCE, SYDNEY, JANUARY 2008

On stage Trevor Jamieson introduces Elton Wirri as Albert Namatjira's grandson. At this moment the audience's attention is drawn to a young Aboriginal man who has been quietly drawing a landscape in white chalk on a black wall on the edge of the performance space. Immediately by referencing this iconic Aboriginal artist, young Elton is transformed from a somewhat invisible Aboriginal youth into a symbol of unfulfilled artistic possibilities, now a young man of status and potential.

***NGAPARTJI NGAPARTJI* THEATRE PERFORMANCE, BELINDA O'TOOLE AND SADIE RICHARDS**
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NATHAN BROWN, YOUTH LEARNING SYMPOSIUM WORKSHOP, DARWIN, SEPTEMBER 2009
PHOTO: YOUTH LEARNING PROJECT

Although access to technology in many remote communities may still be mediated through a non-Indigenous 'gatekeeper', the emergence of affordable small, mobile digital technologies including mobile phones, digital cameras, mp3 players and even laptop computers has brought technology into the everyday lives of Aboriginal people, especially young people. This has shifted the control of technology away from organisations and non-Aboriginal authorities and placed it in the hands of Aboriginal people. Now young people are doing things—by themselves—that previously would have been unimaginable. As a consequence young people's capacity for technological learning and practice is expanding. Even those with low levels of literacy are quickly able to grasp the intuitive problem-solving logic of small media devices and computers. As Youth Media Trainer Anna Cadden suggests, Aboriginal people today 'have a lot more confidence around technology generally':

> People will have personal individual mobile technology because they can keep it safe or they can keep it in their pocket and it's theirs. Mobile technology has brought technology into people's homes...So I think that's influenced that accessibility and therefore that understanding of the language of technology...that makes it easier as well for people to understand technology outside of those mobile devices.

As one facilitator suggested, even the experience of control over the smallest choices (down to the level of fonts, titles or colours) in a computer-based activity may increase a sense of confidence that extends to enacting decisions related to difficult situations in everyday life.[1] Access to resources is therefore an important enabling factor allowing young people to access information and be controllers and producers of knowledge and unique community-valued resources. In this process there is freedom for individual specialisations to emerge and individuals are setting and attaining high level skill and other goals for themselves. The young people in the projects described here are gaining a sense of control over small personal horizons.

FRANCIS FORREST AND AZARIA ROBERSTON, YOUTH LEARNING WORKSHOP, THAKEPERTE, MARCH 2009
PHOTO: YOUTH LEARNING PROJECT

Lastly, public libraries play an important role in providing one kind of access point in the public domain where Indigenous people can access learning resources. Public libraries and LKCs are well-positioned to respond to learning and literacy needs, including the new online trend, for *all* ages and *all* groups.[2] The Alice Springs Public Library offers a unique learning space that is well-utilised by Indigenous people, including Indigenous youth, some of whom attend school and some who don't go to school at all. The library atmosphere is atypical, it is cool and quiet, a place for people to access resources in a free, but rule-bound, environment. Library rules are uniform and apply equally to all. The library encourages neatness, books must be returned, paper picked up, and chairs pushed in. It is also a location where Indigenous people can communicate with people of all cultures. Community and town camp people join the library to use the internet and those who know more show others. Young people come in to use computers especially in the *Akaltye Antheme* Indigenous resource section. Even those with minimal literacy can sidestep alphabetic text, and still have meaningful library engagement.

SCENARIO
ALICE SPRINGS PUBLIC LIBRARY

It is a hot quiet Monday morning and some thirty Aboriginal people are in the library. Some people stay in the library all day. A group of older people are quietly watching a video with headphones on, around ten school-age boys are playing computer games in the youth section, four older men are sitting by themselves reading books. It is cool inside and there few places in town where Aboriginal mums and babies can come and just sit. Two young women in their early twenties come in. One young mother has two babies and a toddler. She is also babysitting for her sister who is doing business in town. She finds two story-books and starts reading with the children. After a while she takes the toddlers to the children's section and plays blocks with them. She says she likes coming to the library to read science magazines to learn more. At her town camp there are few learning facilities or resources, especially for children. Around midday she leaves and has lunch on the lawn nearby and later returns to the library for the afternoon.

After lunch sixty or so Aboriginal people are in the library, reading newspapers, books and magazines. Ten school-age kids are playing games on computers in a far corner while a few mothers with babies and toddlers in the children's section. An 18 year old young man from a town camp is using the internet. He says Drop-in Centres are for school kids and there are few places for young adults like him in town. He uses his sister's library card to book time on the internet. He searches for music sites and has worked out how to type in the names by himself. He also follows the links on *YouTube* to watch film clips. As he leaves the internet an American tourist sits down in his place. The tourist asks for help find his Yahoo site. The young man is proud that he has been the expert and that he has helped an older English-speaking visitor!

SCENARIO
A LIBRARY KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

Last year at the LKC we had some recordings repatriated from the Finke River Mission. They were recordings of old men talking about land rights essentially, relationships to country, that sort of thing. And the old men who were recorded were the grandfathers of a lot of the young people who were working in the library and coming into the library in Ti Tree. So when I brought them up people were very keen to hear them and sat around the computer in the library and listened to them. On my next visit I was told that one of those families had come into the library, they'd moved the audio file from out of the database copied it and put it into *iTunes* with the rest of their music and they were making playlists with some music and some oral histories. So these sound recordings were made in 1975 or something like that so over 30 years ago.

And why I thought this was such a great story was that where this particular family lived was at the creek and there's no power there. So obviously they couldn't play a CD unless they played it in their car or had CD player with batteries. But people were listening to the recordings on the mp3 player, sitting around with headphones, sharing the headphones around, listening to this old man speak. And this was the first time they'd heard him speak for a very long time. Some people had never heard him before, so it was a really poignant moment for everyone. And they wanted to share to with me: "We took that sound file and we put it on the mp3 player and we did this, it was great." So people were really positive about it and I thought it was really innovative.

Yeah, people living in the creek-bed using an mp3 player to listen to an oral history from 1975, it's great! And the old people obviously they were overjoyed, that the young people were interested in listening to this stuff as well. They probably wouldn't have been able to hear it, some of those really old people who live by the creek don't come to the library very much, so it was the young people's only way of sharing that information with the oldies.

JASON GIBSON
NTL MEDIA TRAINER, 2008

SCENARIO
MEDIA CENTRES IN THE
NGAANYATJARRA LANDS

In one community the Media Centre is housed in a demountable with one big room with eight PCs and a Mac holding the *Ara Irititja* database. Another room is an office and a further big room is a videoconferencing room. All through the morning people wander in and sit and use computers. It is a public access space and a community resource. There is no whitefella gatekeeper determining access, the door is open from morning to evening, including lunchtime. Anyone can come in, an elder says he has just been in to check that young people are using the space properly. The main restriction is no school-age kids between 9am and 3pm. A school-age girl is there and is told to go to school. She leaves for a while, then returns, not having gone to school.

In another community a young woman in her late twenties manages the Media Centre and is responsible for opening the door every morning. She is confident with computers and does the job with a minimum of fuss and little non-Indigenous intervention. She begins the day searching, selecting, copying playlists and moving desktop folders on her own computer. Her adolescent son is not at school and spends the day in the Media Centre with her. People wander in and out throughout the day: playing Solitaire on the old PCs or listening to songs on *iTunes* and downloading music from the *iTunes* library. Two young women spend the morning choosing songs from *iTunes*. They have bought blank CDs at the store and burn the CDs in the Media Centre, label them and take them to play at home. A man in his 50s comes in. He tells the manager what songs he wants and she copies around 40 songs onto his mp3 player. While he's hanging around he takes a photo with his own digital camera. He has with him a small canvas bag with various leads and chargers for his mp3 player and digital camera. At home he has a laptop for downloading photos, playing music, writing reports for his job. Around 4pm the manager organises to go on air with the local radio station 5NPY broadcast across the NPY Lands. She sets up her playlist on *iTunes* a mix of local Aboriginal bands plus some Gospel music and rock and roll. As she plays the songs she makes community announcements in English and Ngaanyatjarra.

CHRIS REID DOING AN INTERVIEW WITH ABC TV, THAKEPERTE, MARCH 2009
PHOTO: YOUTH LEARNING PROJECT

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 2:
A SPACE FOR HANGING OUT AND 'MUCKING AROUND'

International research on youth media practice commonly identifies the 'digital bedroom' as one of the most vibrant kinds of digital learning spaces for youth (Jones 2010; Livingstone 2002; Sefton-Green 2006). Here adolescents in advanced industrialised economies can be found 'hanging out, messing around and geeking out' (Ito et al. 2010) with computers, alone or online in small friendship networks, in the privacy of their bedrooms. Adolescents in remote communities generally do not have the luxury of bedroom culture, or access to computers and the internet at home, or garages for teenage bands. Therefore, informal learning spaces such as media centres, youth centres and libraries perform an important function as *communal* 'digital bedrooms' (Kral 2010b). Here activities are public, yet the privacy that is so difficult to attain at home, can be found for individual production and the safe storage of virtual and material texts (in computer folders or memory sticks and locked storerooms). In these spaces electricity and the resources that enable productive learning including computers, cameras, books and even the internet are available, and in working order, for people to use.

Until recently, control of technology was predominantly in the hands of media organisations or community groups. Thus Aboriginal people were typically disengaged from the production process and needed higher levels of assistance. In the BRACS era film-making was more sophisticated, editing was often done by outsiders and then the video cassette sat on a shelf, a detached object, reliant on having a video player and a TV in working order to view it. But with digital media it's all self-contained in the one box where everything can be done: film can be stored and edited, music added, and the edited film can be shown in bite size pieces all in the same computer box. The digital moment has created a process that is much more accessible especially for Indigenous youth. Now a video clip can be made in one day: an idea can be generated in the morning, filmed, edited and completed by the end of the day, then burned onto a DVD and taken home to show family.

Access to what have been termed the 'new generation media centres' in remote communities is recognised as opening up an important collective learning environment for young people to engage, develop skills, create media and increasingly take on professional and leadership roles in their communities (Indigenous Remote Communications Association 2010: 59):

> Community media centres are providing a Lifespan learning space in remote communities where there is little engagement in formal education and training. It is a space where remote Indigenous people are interacting on an equal basis with media professionals, without any power differential. It engages all generations in technologically competent tasks of creative cultural production intended for use by the community. (Indigenous Remote Communications Association 2010: 67)

In these spaces 'there is no right or wrong way' for learning or participation and everybody is '*set up to succeed*' (Indigenous Remote Communications Association 2010: 67–68).

These are also the spaces that nurture what youth media worker Shane White from Lajamanu terms 'learning by mucking around'. Young people's access to new technologies and control of digital practices is allowing them to gain control, not only over the production process and editing, but also self-representation. Young film-makers are confidently using editing software like iMovie and *Final Cut Pro* to manipulate the medium and the images. As observed by Anna Cadden (interview 2009): 'to have that realisation, not only do you go out with a camera but then you can manipulate these images and you can create a story out of them. And that story can then be shared and it's a way of communicating.'

Learning capacity: to think for yourself, decide for yourself, you have the power to change that whole scene with the edit. You gain the confidence to make those decisions, to stand strong in what you believe and what you see and what you think is best for yourself and other people.

MICAH WENITONG
YOUTH WORKER, YUENDUMU, 2009

Similarly, music recording in the pre-digital era was a long process often controlled by non-Aboriginal 'experts'. Now, young musicians can be the producers as well as the musicians, undertaking the whole process: writing songs down, laying down tracks, and creating text and artwork for CD sleeves all within a short period of time. The *GarageBand* music recording process suits the remote Indigenous context predominantly because the software is relatively indestructible and lends itself to fearless experimentation. Music production for young musicians now requires musicality and creativity *and* computer competence. In the process of music production we are seeing independent and collaborative learning. The *GarageBand* process is providing an opportunity for young men in particular, to privately focus on something that really matters, to do it well, to create their own style and, moreover, to 'shine'. In this private recording environment young musicians seek perfection and rework tracks over many days of improvisation, focused practice, recording and rerecording to create their own unique sound. In this way they experience what it is like to set their minds to something, to practice and to perfect something that matters. Having access to the

space, time and resources enabled Wingellina musician Nathan Brown to 'muck around' and perfect his specialisation. According to fellow musician Chris Reid, Nathan 'is good at the computer because he's good at anything':

> With *GarageBand* Nathan already knew he was clever, but other people didn't know he could learn so quick. He likes to fiddle around with things, touching everything, working it out.

Through situated learning, they figured out what to do by 'mucking around'. By using the logic of the symbol system embedded in the *GarageBand* structure, in concert with action and embodied practice (Goodwin 2000), they became as Lave and Wenger state 'learners who understand what they are learning' because they are 'active agents in the appropriation of knowledge' (Lave 1990: 325).[3]

In summary, many young people are structuring their own learning in environments that encourage individual agency and creativity. In these spaces they are free to 'hang out' and experiment and to share and learn from one another. Through everyday exposure to digital technologies they are participating in meaningful everyday learning and practice. These are sites in the public domain where young people can experience a sense of ownership, belonging and control as well as the 'freedoms of time, space, activity and authority' (Heath and Street 2008: 5).

Shane and Maxwell have had the privilege of having a BRACS space there that they really feel ownership over and they look after it. So it is used for work, and for fun and joy and things like that, but it's used mainly for video editing and radio broadcasting. And it's their space, they've taken full ownership over the equipment that PAW placed in Lajamanu and left there for them to use so they've had access to equipment and the computers and they've had a space that they've felt is their own and felt really comfortable in and would go to every day. So in a sense it's that spatial thing and that ownership over the space and that space works in Lajamanu in that sense. The equipment is looked after so there's no worry about what's going on, these guys have a real sense of responsibility over that equipment and it's theirs to play with and work with.

ANNA CADDEN
WETT MEDIA TRAINER, 2009

SHANE WHITE: 'MEDIA HAS CHANGED IN MY COMMUNITY'
PHOTO: JANE HODSON

MEDIA HAS CHANGED IN MY COMMUNITY

When I was a child growing up in Lajamanu I used to go and hang out with my friends and make toys out of old tins and wires and play around during the weekend, but on week days I had to be in school because my mother was a Warlpiri teacher.

When I was growing up in Lajamanu I remember we only had a TV and a Cassette player. Then I used to own a walkman. Now I have an iPod, a computer (Both PC and Mac) and a flat screen TV and I also have internet at home and do *Facebook* from my mobile phone.

So Media has changed in my Community.

I remember watching this new channel ICTV (Indigenous Community Television). The first time I saw ICTV I was glued to the TV. It was something new. I liked most of the videos and it made me want to make some videos for my community. Without ICTV I would've been working somewhere different. So ICTV was important for us.

There are now people walking around with iPods and most people have Pay TV and mobile phones. 2 weeks ago when my mother sent me a text message in English, I laughed.

For young Aboriginal media workers like us it's fun and we also learn new things as we are making videos. At the BRACS room where we work, we have keys to go in anytime to use the video camera, people trust us so we have control in the work we do.

SHANE WHITE
YOUTH MEDIA WORKER

(Presentation for the Information Technologies and Indigenous Communities Symposium, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra, 2010)

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 3:
A SPACE WHERE LEARNERS LEARN

Thus far we have emphasised how access to resources enables autonomy and agency in learning. We have highlighted the spatial factors that contribute to individual or collaborative voluntary expertise development, or 'learning by mucking around'. In this section we focus on the crucial enabling role played by facilitators or 'expert mentors' in the learning process. While many *un*remarkable adult educators or trainers who impart content from a standard curriculum have come and gone in remote communities, the ones who have the 'magic' stand out. In this research project we encountered many great learning facilitators who planted the seed and nurtured the growth of learning. Although much of what makes a good facilitator is dependent on character and cannot be emulated, a few basic principles apply.

In all of these contexts successful outcomes have been attained through collaborations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the learning process, rather than top-down formulaic training delivery. Such facilitators are skilled professionals. They are passionate about what they do and they love working with Indigenous youth. They have the ability to teach complex technical skills while engaging young adults in projects that entail precision and commitment to completing the task. These facilitators do not see themselves as 'bosses' but give agency to the young people they are working with. They work in a highly collaborative and respectful manner. They show respect for and interest in the language and culture of the learners, favour side by side delivery and do not judge the learners' performance.

> **As a video trainer you are coming in pretty much always to a community for a short period of time to do training and you know it can be quite intense. But what you always have to realise is that you are coming into a community, people live here the whole time, and they have lives outside of the training, so you have to work around people's lives. You can't come in expecting that everyone should drop everything because you are here, you know. "Like they should all come and be trained by me, isn't this a great opportunity and why aren't they doing that?" And those sort of questions don't make a lot of sense when you look at the bigger picture. And so what you actually have to do as a trainer when you do just drop in and out of communities is work along people's timelines that they have already set up. So having that group and a lot of people participating in that process allows for people to come and go, in and out where they can while still being open to train them along all the different stages.**
>
> **ANNA CADDEN**
> WETT MEDIA TRAINER, 2009

In our research we observed that successful expert mentors invariably facilitated productive learning activities that were project-based, rather than assessment-driven, and built upon a sense of mutual respect, the development of real and ongoing relationships, recognition of learners' existing knowledge and repetition of key concepts. These principles apply particularly well to the learning of new digital technologies, as musician Chris Reid suggests with reference to the technical process of learning the *GarageBand*

EXPERT MENTORS WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

1. ANNA CADDEN WITH SHANE WHITE
2. MARGARET CAREW WITH GAYLE CAMPBELL
3. JANE LEONARD WITH BELINDA O'TOOLE AND SADIE RICHARDS
4. JASON GIBSON WITH MAXWELL TASMAN
5. DANIEL FEATHERSTONE WITH RICARDO WESTON AND AMOS URBAN

ALL PHOTOS: YOUTH LEARNING PROJECT

STEWART NELSON MENTORING ANTHONY NELSON
PHOTO: YOUTH LEARNING PROJECT

music recording application from a mentor expert musician:

> He came out here and showed us this recording thing, *GarageBand* computer. Showed us that, said that we can record songs on here, easy way....and we started from there then. It was little bit hard when we first started...Once we got used to it, it was right then. Started recording. He showed us a couple of times, a couple of days then we was doing it all by ourselves...He just let us do it. If we make a mistake we'll call him then he'll come. Then he'll just help us, then he'll go. He'll let us off then and then when make another mistake we'll call him. Then he'll show us, he'll keep showing us until we catch it all, you know. That's a good way of learning. That's an easy way of learning, like when people show you, when you practice, like when you do it, when someone show you and you do it again, and you do it, and try again and you'll get it, you'll catch it, like that. The more you practice the more you learn, like that...we learn from making mistakes.

In addition to learning from 'expert mentors' or trainers from outside the community, in many of the projects we observed youth learning from older relatives and each other. Significantly, new digital technologies lend themselves to a process of peer to peer learning and it is important that this style of learning is facilitated and supported.

In the field of music, for example, *formal* training has rarely been an option in remote regions: the young have typically learned by imitating the styles of older musicians. As children they mimicked drum rhythms with their hands or played 'air guitar', and as adolescents they honed their focus through observation, listening, and experimentation (Kral 2011a). This is reflected in the *GarageBand* studio at Ngaanyatjarra Media where a three-tier hierarchy is often apparent: musicians in their mid-twenties such as Chris and Nathan, are the main singers, musicians,

> **I see more of the youngfellas are interested in music and some youngfellas that are now adult they're learning from young people, like how to use the *GarageBand*. So not only the teachers are showing the *Anangus*, teaching, it's like young people, like young *Anangu* fellas or *kungka*, like girl or boy, teaching others, teaching the older *Anangus*. 'Cause the older *Anangus* like they watch how the young people are doing and they get interested in that and they just ask, anytime, anyway, and they'll show them.**
>
> **NATALIE O'TOOLE**
> WINGELLINA COMMUNITY, 2008

and producers; adolescents in their mid-teens are actively learning from these older musicians; and school-age children sit on the sidelines observing and imitating the memorised moves on instruments while recordings are replayed on the computer.[4] These 'intent participants' (Rogoff et al. 2003), or 'little young ones' as Chris calls them are not excluded or sent out of the room. Instead, they are incorporated, given space to observe, and occasionally offered the opportunity to try out a technique as part of an understood process of moving from observation to imitation. Instructional interactions are ad hoc and tend to be non-verbal, although on occasion an older 'mentor' may relay specific oral information to a junior 'apprentice'. This situation is echoed across the research sites. At Djilpin Arts a worker suggests that this form of 'peer training' works 'because they speak the same language, know the other kids and it's so much better that they are being trained by their own mob'.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 4: A SPACE TO GROW INTO NEW ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The kind of youth-oriented organisations outlined here provide opportunities for young adults to participate in project-based learning and take on responsible goal-oriented roles. Expert mentors and other enabling adults also play an important supporting role in keeping young people, who have been trained, engaged and actively involved in ongoing projects. Through playing a variety of adult roles that carry real consequences within a situation or organisation, young people take on meaningful roles and responsibilities and the process gives agency to the ideas of the participants.

A lot of it comes down to having a strong goal. What you want to do and how you're gonna go about it. Once they see the steps to get there they take it on. But if there's no outcome or no goal, what point is there?

MICAH WENITONG
YOUTH WORKER, YUENDUMU, 2009

Theatre work in particular is a context where youth participants assume meaningful roles. Through rehearsing, performing and touring around Australia with the *Ngapartji Ngapartji* theatre show the youth performers engaged in an intense, highly disciplined, rule-bound and physically demanding work routine. Performance 'work' was taken seriously. Ngapartji Ngapartji saw the potential in young people and expected them to perform at a high level. Young people had to learn the discipline of rehearsals and performance in a challenging learning space where every individual is expected to perform and shirking responsibility is not acceptable behaviour. In rehearsals they were assisted by the older *a<u>n</u>angu* women who played an important role as mentors: they guided the young ones and repeated English stage directions in Pitjantjatjara. However once onstage, there was an expectation of unequivocal individual responsibility.

REVONNA URBAN WORKING IN THE GHUNMARN CULTURE CENTRE, WUGULARR, 2008
PHOTO: YOUTH LEARNING PROJECT

SCENARIO
NGAPARTJI NGAPARTJI
THEATRE PERFORMANCE,
SYDNEY, JANUARY 2008

Young people can be self-consumed and unco-operative, not concentrating on rehearsal instructions. In the rehearsal space they fiddle constantly with mobile phones and mp3 players. Until finally, these mobile devices are taken off them by the Director with much protestation by young people. Yet later the demand of the performance forces a level of concentration, listening, comprehending and reacting perfectly that is unlike everyday experience and unlike rehearsing. It is the performative moment, the real deal, like ceremonial performance.

Through touring young people learned the discipline of timetabled activities, routines, schedules and duties and responded positively as they had all chosen to be there. Young people were given real responsibilities, they were challenged to go the extra step in a risk-laden environment and they did. The progression from shyness to confidence was palpable. By stretching themselves beyond safe and familiar boundaries, young people recognised the need for a wider range of skills, including literacy.

Video-making also requires defined roles: a director, camera operator and editor. Sometimes they are the same person and sometimes they are different and young people gravitate to the roles that suit them. Editing of films on the computer is a long and arduous task, as Media Trainer Anna Cadden notes (interview 2009):

> Some young people have developed a real love for it. They have persisted in acquiring and practising the skills, turning up day after day at times when expert mentors have been running short workshops.

In video-making young people are experiencing control and ownership because they are the ones that know about the technology and new media. Oftentimes they are making cultural recordings with elders. Old people have clearly defined roles as the holders of cultural knowledge. Simultaneously young people are taking on language and culture maintenance roles as the facilitators of digital media. In this way media work is validated by elders who need young people to mediate between old knowledge and new technologies.

Media is a team activity, something that has a goal, it has an outcome that can then be shared with the whole community.

ANNA CADDEN
WETT MEDIA TRAINER, 2009

NATALIE O'TOOLE LEARNING FILM AND EDITING SKILLS, NGAANYATJARRA MEDIA
PHOTO: YOUTH LEARNING PROJECT

At Ngaanyatjarra Media as young people have acquired new skills they have taken on roles as producers, artists, song-writers, as well as musicians. Nathan quickly became known as the 'producer'. As a producer Nathan raises the bar and brings the other musicians up to a higher level. He wants to do music well, he teaches people, demonstrates his skill and others aspire to rise to that level.[5] Bands from communities hundreds of kilometers away would come over to the recording studio to have their songs recorded and produced by Nathan. These new local producers also train young people in their own and other communities. These young musicians work hard and take their roles seriously. They experience what it is to be driven, obsessed and connected to something that has cultural resonance and is valued by Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike. At the same time, young musicians are gaining status from having their recorded music listened to in the community, on local and national radio and uploaded to websites.[6]

Youth programs can also build up an understanding of what constitutes work, through encouraging responsibility and rewards for work. Interestingly, one youth centre had a lot of rules, mostly created by young people themselves to keep the space functioning. As a youth worker noted 'most of the rules are their rules and the rules have meaning for young people, unlike school rules.' Moreover the consequences for breaking rules make sense and this is allowing young people to take on individual responsibility in the communal space.

We do have a lot of rules that we don't even realise, for example 'if the band doesn't pack up they don't get band the next day', 'if you're cooking you gotta clean up afterwards', 'no hand stands in the kitchen!' We got a 'no kids on the laptop' rule...It was actually a rule made by all the older kids. They said "Until those younger kids learn how to use that laptop they are not allowed on it!" So we're in the process of making a kids computer so they can delete what they want but still get that exposure...

AMY HARDIE
YOUTH WORKER, WILLOWRA, 2009

REVONNA URBAN, GHUNMARN CULTURE CENTRE STALL, DARWIN ABORIGINAL ARTS FAIR, 2008
PHOTO: YOUTH LEARNING PROJECT

Djilpin Arts is community owned and controlled. This generates the sense that people have the right to own and participate in what is going on. In turn, this level of ownership carries obligations, and young people in particular are trusted with certain responsibilities, they work hard and they meet those responsibilities. Young people have to think about their participation and their ideas are taken seriously. Other community members see this, they see young women working in the Culture Centre having keys and responsibilities and they see young men being given responsibility for expensive camera equipment.

At the Culture Centre the young women want to understand what it takes to run the whole process and they want to do it themselves. If responsibility is given, they rise to it, moreover they embrace it. Revonna is the senior arts worker. She works full-time and is responsible, interested and committed. Significantly, Revonna has her own set of keys and every day she opens and closes the centre, a responsibility almost unheard of in most Aboriginal communities where non-Aboriginal people generally control the keys to community spaces. Importantly, it is assumed that Revonna is up to the task. As Revonna herself describes:

> I have to check if everyone come to work at right time and make sure no-one's like, especially stranger, be near that office area, cause there's money anywhere inside, especially that phone money got to be kept in that little safe, that box. I'm trying to be careful like no-one go in because they might steal it. Also trying to make sure, like about that timesheet.

Revonna is aware that she has to demonstrate honesty, responsibility and leadership to the other young women because the shame of letting people down would be too great. The criteria for employment at the Culture Centre are not qualifications or literacy and numeracy competence, but familial networks and cultural authority. For Revonna the Culture Centre is 'a good place to work, to have culture and whiteman law at the same time'. It is this dimension that endows her with the cultural authority or 'right' to do the task at hand and she was employed on that basis and carries that responsibility. All the young women are given trust and they do not abuse it, they take responsibility for what they are doing with pride and this is reinforced by strong community support.

GHUNMARN CULTURE CENTRE STALL, DARWIN ABORIGINAL ARTS FAIR, 2008
PHOTO: YOUTH LEARNING PROJECT

They want to understand what it takes to run the whole thing, they want to do it themselves, they don't want to be bossed around forever. I think that they embrace the responsibility and the literacy and numeracy stuff doesn't seem to phase them. They'll check or go "Oh, I'm not sure"... there's heaps of things like that, just little things where you show them once and they know it. So they don't seem to struggle with the literacy and numeracy-based elements of their work as long as someone has shown them.

FLEUR PARRY
GENERAL MANAGER
DJILPIN ARTS, 2008

SCENARIO
AT THE CULTURE CENTRE

Revonna works full-time every day and takes responsibility for training three new girls who will work half day shifts from 9–12.30 and 12.30–4. At the end of every day the girls have to fill in a timesheet of hours worked. The young women work with Revonna to negotiate how they are going to work their shifts. They come up with the idea of making a roster. They all propose suggestions for how it should be done:

"I work usually from 12 to 4."

"Put it like this, do it sideways."

"Do them like this, rough one, and on computer neat one."

Revonna suggests laminating the roster so the names can be attached with blu-tac. They evaluate the suggestions and decide that this won't work. It is better that the same two girls work every morning shift and the other works every afternoon shift. That way they will remember who should be there, rather than use a written timetable.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 5: A SPACE TO PRACTICE ORAL AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE

Earlier we noted the importance of youth engagement in collaborative tasks in youth-based organisations for language development. Heath and Street (2008: 99-100) note that the playing of meaningful roles 'ratchets up language performance' and 'supportive strict adult models who work alongside learners can provide language input that young learners pick up'. We found that where Indigenous youth are given responsibility for adult roles they seamlessly begin to engage in the performance and authentic practice of such roles. In many of the youth-oriented projects described here young people are given responsibility, assume production roles and collaborate with mentor experts who take them seriously and have high expectations of their performance. New forms of interaction with adults in the project sites are allowing young people to negotiate different types of social relations where they engage in complex turn-taking interactions with an expectation of high communicative competence. In the production roles outlined here, young people listen to cohesive stretches of technical discourse and participate in task-based and social exchanges in SAE. In these contexts young people acquire and practice genres and structures of English that are unfamiliar to them. In exchanges around participatory tasks, complex grammatical structures are modelled and repeated. Young people listen to and interpret instructions, request clarification and initiate ideas and actions in what is for many a second language. In this mode of learning young people are also risk-takers when they push themselves forward to talk to non-Aboriginal people, as tour guides in arts centres or as performers on tour in urban centres.

Dani Powell, Assistant Director for the *Ngapartji Ngapartji* performance in Sydney in 2008 describes how, when young people are on tour, everyone is speaking in English 'so people have to work it out'. She states that in her role as Assistant Director a lot of time was spent translating what the Director was saying:

> "What's he saying?" they ask.
>
> And I reply: He says "We need the *company* to be stronger."
>
> "What does *company* mean?" they ask.

Powell continues:

> So learning the language of where we are and what's happening, and the need to know to be included, the need to know to get it right and not be shamed. I can't even count the number of times that people have asked me words, which hardly ever happens in town…But when we're travelling because you want to know if you can go in there or not, you want to know what the rules are, and I point that stuff out too so people start to realise: "Oh those signs are gonna help me get in and look good!"

When tourists come I'm starting to push myself forward to talk in English really strongly and when they come to buy to something and I try to write it down and think, how do I start off first?...It's getting there to read, like by myself, like I kind of push myself to read more so I can get more better then.

REVONNA URBAN
BESWICK COMMUNITY, 2008

Similarly, the young women who work at the Ghunmarn Culture Centre in Beswick learn customer relations skills and develop oral fluency and communication skills in SAE. Learning to be an arts worker requires interacting with other Indigenous and non-Indigenous workers, visitors and tourists and using SAE in a manner not typically encountered in everyday life. The arts workers code-switch between everyday discourse with each other in 'Kriol'[7] and SAE with non-Indigenous people. This entails using an informal register with familiars and a more formal speech register with visitors or tourists. It is linguistically and socially challenging for the young women to approach a group of non-Indigenous strangers and ask: "Would you like some help?". Likewise, making the shift from an informal register: "Can you smell it?" (referring to the soap they have made for sale) to the polite form "Would you like to smell it?", or from "You wanna look upstairs?" to "Would you like to look at the Blanasi Art Collection upstairs?", is demanding. It is through situated learning and practice that young people are enculturated into using these more formal registers.

The young women also have to be able to talk about the art, what it means, the language group of the artists and how it relates to the kinship system. Augustina Kennedy describes how she loves working at the Culture Centre 'because they've got my grandfather, great grandfather stories and painting'. Augustina has the cultural authority to show tourists the permanent Blanasi Collection where she tells her grandfather's story: 'I can remember and I always pass that on' she tells visitors. She carries on the personal legacy of this inheritance. Augustina also has a special way of connecting with visitors and making them feel comfortable *because* she shares this personal connection when she talks about how some of the artworks were painted by her grandfather and great grandfather. Augustina appears to interact easily with the tourists because she intersperses English phrases of social etiquette such as "How was your morning?". Augustina is able to code-switch into SAE and deal with these linguistically demanding social situations. Nevertheless, she has to work hard at these oral interactions as English is not her first language.

At Beswick lack of literacy and numeracy is not a barrier to youth employment. All the young women who are arts workers have to learn computer skills and business skills, including cash flow implications and concepts of profit and loss. The young women must learn time management skills and remember the order and sequence of actions required to successfully operate the enterprise, all of which demand language, literacy and numeracy competence. In this way, they are gaining and practising the essential linguistic skills and organisational learning required of employees in any workplace.

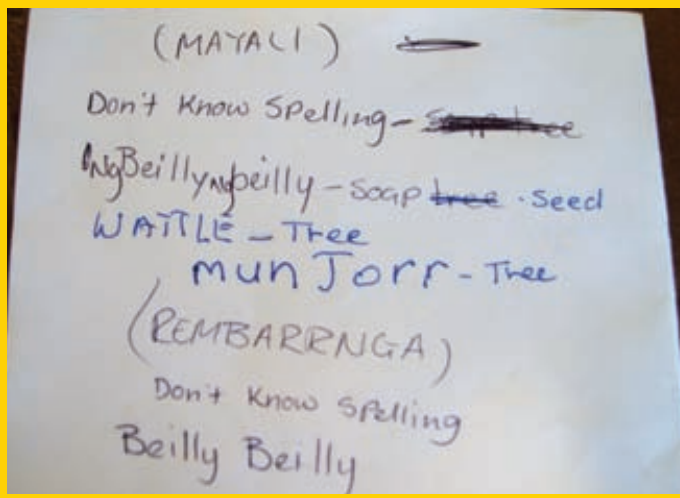
In addition, in this Kriol-speaking community intergenerational exchanges offer a chance for young people to hear and practice their heritage languages (Rembarrnga, Dalibon, Mayali). The young women who work in the Ghunmarn Culture Centre collect sugar bag honey and plants with elders for the making of the beauty products and seek traditional language names and processes. In this process they assume a researcher role: collecting plant specimens, drawing information from elders, noting terms and seeking orthographical corrections from linguists. Elders collaborate with the young women to find plant names using published sources to compare plant specimens with drawings and photos. This activity generates community interest and people congregate. Young people ask questions and elders discuss the ways in which the plants were used in the old days, drawing on memories of traditional practices and linguistic forms.

In these environments the mother tongue is valued and cultural productions commonly incorporate oral or written texts in both the vernacular and English. These experiences are building positive identity formation and the development of the wide array of spoken and written forms needed for the multitude of intercultural, intergenerational situations which individuals experience daily and across the life course (Heath 1990; Heath 1997).

SCENARIO
GHUNMARN CULTURE CENTRE, BESWICK

A typical day's work for the young arts workers requiring oral and written communication skills, numeracy/business skills and cultural knowledge:

1. **Welcome visitors.**
2. **Talk about the artists.**
3. **Describe how the work was made and the traditional uses of the objects.**
4. **Describe how the beauty products were made and the traditional uses of bush medicines.**
5. **Find or recall prices of objects.**
6. **Fill in sales sheets with catalogue numbers and codes, find certificates for artwork.**
7. **Add up prices correctly.**
8. **Ask customer if they want cash, savings or credit option. Use cash, EFTPOS or credit card facility correctly, give receipts and give the correct change.**
9. **Suggest or propose to visitors that they look at the 'Blanasi Art Collection' upstairs.**
10. **Make and serve coffee.**
11. **Catalogue new works coming in: measure canvases and price them according to what kind of work it is.**
12. **Prepare certificates to go with the work including the story for each piece, the artist's name, skin name, language group, and so forth.**



YOUNG WOMEN RESEARCH BUSH PLANT NAMES TO CREATE WRITTEN RESOURCES FOR BEAUTY PRODUCTS SOLD AT GHUNMARN CULTURE CENTRE, WUGULARR

ALL PHOTOS: YOUTH LEARNING PROJECT

gUgU PRODUCTS

White Medicine Soap

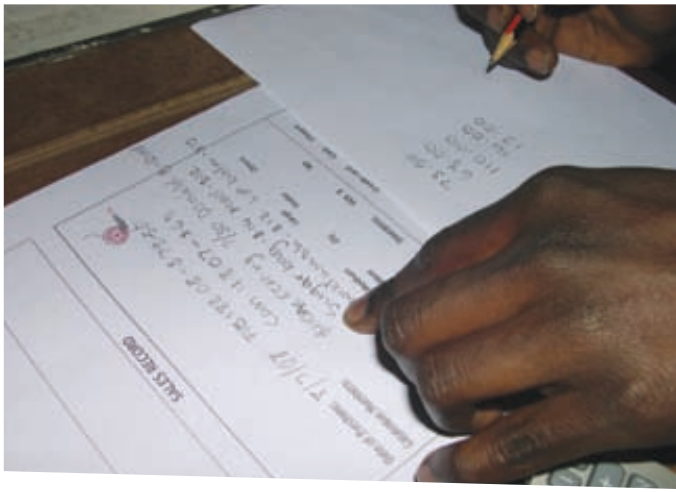
CYMBOPOGON BOMBYCINUS
Family: Poaceae

Djirr or Jirr in Jawoyn

When you have a cough or flu you collect this medicine grass and boil it up. You rub it on like Vicks
Vaporub. It smells like lemon grass. Also you can boil it up with water to make a wash for scabies and skin sores.

Enjoy this soap – it will make your skin clean and healthy!

ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING IN THE GHUNAMRN CULTURE CENTRE
PHOTO: YOUTH LEARNING PROJECT



An important feature of learning spaces is their capacity to provide a place where adolescents and young adults can 'practice' their learning, including literacy. While this may be enabled just by having access to the resources needed for alphabetic or digital literacy activities, in some of the case studies we observed additional literacy support was provided.

The Ngapartji Ngapartji project employed literacy worker Jane Leonard to support young people's literacy development in integrated project-based activities. The young adult participants at Ngapartji are representative of the many Indigenous youth in remote regions who, says Jane, have 'slipped through the cracks' of current government strategies aiming at redressing poor engagement and outcomes in learning and literacy. All have English as a second, third or fourth language, attended school irregularly and had dropped out of school by Year 9. Consequently they have low English literacy levels. Additionally, they have had negative experiences of accredited adult literacy or training programs under current government legislation enforcing activity agreements as part of receiving Centrelink income support. Typically, they want to learn more but formal adult literacy courses are too confronting for them. Evidence from participants suggests that such courses have been intimidating, confusing, alienating, shaming, too hard, too easy, irrelevant, or a mixture of all these factors. Program objectives did not link to participant aspirations, needs, interests and skills, or provide any clear benefits. Consequently, participants did not attend or dropped out—and were penalised financially. This cycle is often repeated over and over again, and perpetuates negative perceptions of the role of formal education. It also reinforces patterns of non-attendance and non-participation, as well as a sense of powerlessness and low self-esteem.[8]

While the youth participants possess low English literacy levels, these young people possess a range of competencies and aspirations.[9] The approach to learning taken by Ngapartji Ngapartji worked for them. They were able to maintain and develop their alphabetic literacy with the project-based literacy worker who engaged youth by merging media with intergenerational learning drawing on experiences of performance and production with the show, digital photo, videos and web-based productions. Literacy was enhanced because it was part of a situated and culturally meaningful activity. In the context of the Ngapartji Ngapartji project all the young people made significant contributions and achievements in arts, culture, language and multimedia forums and tangibly contributed to the success of a nationally recognised and critically acclaimed theatre project.

Best way to learn is to do it, get in there, get your hands dirty, get on there, play with it… Access can be a huge problem, one of the main things that can lead to success there. Anybody who is interested and wanting to learn through media needs access to a computer. Consistently doing stuff outside of school, as a lifestyle and as part of everyday life. People need access everyday…because of lack of infrastructure it's been difficult to gain access to these computers on a regular basis, every single day. Learning won't continue if people don't have access every day…

MICAH WENITONG
YOUTH WORKER, YUENDUMU, 2009

NYIRRIPI YOUTH CENTRE FLYER
PHOTO: YOUTH LEARNING PROJECT

In the past it was hard to get things rolling from scratch. Well spatially, physical space, there's been a BRACS room here but it hasn't been operational for a long time because there were questions over who was responsible for it and that caused a lot of problems with its upkeep and its maintenance and it wasn't looked after… it became a sort of unviable space in the community without people being willing to take responsibility for it. So that meant that that sort of space if you like was sort of out of bounds and not accessible to many people… Now there's a direct line from this very strong youth program and *Jaru Pirrjirdi* and all these other committees and activities are happening around the youth program. So now there's this quite clear through-line. There are people coming and engaging with media in a different way to where it's been before I think…Also with the youth programs being installed in communities now where there haven't been youth programs before, that also adds a massive support to media training, letting people have access to it on a regular basis…I think the whole vocational thing, whilst that's the point of the WETT training if you like, it's not what brings people to the training it's not why people come to learn video, it's because they want to learn video. Having that space where you could rock up every day—and people knew where you were and it was embedded in the community, right in the centre next to the shop.

ANNA CADDEN
WETT MEDIA TRAINER, 2009

Likewise the Mt Theo youth program at Yuendumu operated a Night School for young people wanting additional literacy support. Night School is an initiative from the *Jaru Pirrjirdi* (Strong Voices) Project. It came about when young adults expressed interest in furthering their education. Many of these young adults had left school early or had negative experiences within the institutional education and/or training system. Night School aimed to provide a less formal environment through which the young adults could re-access education. Importantly, this approach involved self-initiated learning where young people shaped their own re-engagement with learning (often with school-like alphabetic literacy) according to their self-defined learning needs. There was no prescribed curriculum, but Night School activities involved creative and media rich experiences including mathematics, English, science, reading, writing, art, music, dance, and computers. Additionally, Night School opportunities were provided for young people to participate in practical workshops on issues including sexual health, substance misuse forums and dealing with 'government forms'.[10]

As these examples show, it is critical that we conceptualise literacy not only as a skill learned at school, but also as a competency acquired in situ without the need for formal lessons. Even without the provision of specific literacy tuition it is crucial that youth workers, arts workers and media trainers be mindful of creative ways to support participants with low level literacy. Suggestions for additional alphabetic literacy strategies in English and Aboriginal languages can be found in Appendix 2.

We've got Macs, PCs and the X-Box as well. Kids love burning CDs, it's the number one thing to do! Play lists on *iTunes*, photos, printing photos. When we first got here I was amazed by some of the computer skills. Like something would break on a Mac and we'd leave it with M. or someone and come back ten minutes later and she'd have fixed it! I'd have spent an hour on it and couldn't get past how to open it up. I'm sure there's a lot of literacy skills that they are learning without even realising it...Because most of the kids don't go to school after 12 or 13, anything they do is really good. In doing stuff they ask you how to spell something. Just basic, but for them they quite enjoy it, goes at their own pace, they do what they want. And it's better because they are doing it because they want to do it, rather than because they are told to.

KYLE JARVIE
YOUTH WORKER, WILLOWRA, 2009

A lot of the online educational material that I've seen isn't very engaging it's pretty boring. And it's just the wrong way to approach to developing IT skills or digital literacies or whatever you want to call it amongst Aboriginal kids, it needs to be offline, face to face, in communities using resources that are available online but it needs to be once again a localized activity and supported in the local context. I think there's this attitude within some levels of government and other agencies that are saying let's develop online resources for people. But I know from my work with people in communities that's almost pointless because you need to be able to direct people to this stuff and they need to feel like they belong to it...I just think that that approach of let's develop online education isn't really, it's not there yet. That's not to say it won't happen in the future, but because of those barriers it's not really where we should be heading at the moment, I don't think.

JASON GIBSON
NTL MEDIA TRAINER, 2008

LANA CAMPBELL, TI TREE
PHOTO: YOUTH LEARNING PROJECT

SADIE RICHARDS, NGAPARTJI NGAPARTJI
PHOTO: YOUTH LEARNING PROJECT

NGAPARTJI NGAPARTJI WEBSITE
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DESIGN PRINCIPLE 6: A SPACE TO EXPRESS SELF AND CULTURAL IDENTITY THROUGH MULTIMODAL FORMS

Theorists (Gee 2003; Kress 2003) have called on policymakers to reflect and rethink how we consider communication, literacy and learning in these new economic, social and technological times. In the Indigenous arena we see little evidence of innovative thinking or reasoned challenges to old conceptions of literacy, as policy makers and education department bureaucrats tend to come from the pre-digital age group. Commentators often assume a shared understanding of what literacy is, yet few have moved beyond a school-based deficit perspective on alphabetic literacy and so often appear not to notice the changing modes of literacy in the 'new media age' (Kress 2003).

As we have outlined, in the various research sites for this project young people are experiencing self-directed, creative, meaningful productive activity enabled by access to resources and a sense of spatial control. We also suggest that concurrent with the penetration of computers, mobile phones and online social networking in remote communities, alphabetic and digital literacy strategies are being used to create unique, culturally meaningful products. Accordingly, we are beginning to see how digital technology is transforming modes of oral and written communication in the remote Indigenous context. With access to resources and regular practice, new forms of textual communication and linguistic creativity are emerging. Here multimodal practice is reliant on standardised alphabetic symbols coupled with left to right and top to bottom processing; simultaneously it is interacting with a pictographic symbol system to provide a new communicative repertoire. Indigenous young people, like their peers in urban Australia and overseas, are constructing and framing multimodal texts using intertextual layering of image, text, song and gesture (Hull 2003; Ito et al. 2010). Importantly, it is evident that where young people have access to digital resources and technologies they are engaging in new forms of media production to express themselves and their cultures. In doing so they are incorporating a range of multimodal literacies (encompassing oral, written, visual, and gestural modes of representation and communication).

ALUNYTJURU BAND UPLOAD TO YOUTUBE

Indigenous youth are also using digital technologies and alphabetic text in the maintenance of social relationships and the generation of new cultural products. In media centres, LKCs and even in homes in communities with mobile phone or Wi-Fi internet access, youth are uploading personal profiles, photos and films, using text and symbols in inventive ways, and writing—usually in English—about themselves and to each other. Through *Facebook* and mobile phone text messaging they are maintaining sociality and stretching the boundaries of what is possible, including transferring mobile phone photos and film to *Facebook*, reformatting films to bluetooth between mobile phones, and dragging sound files from digital heritage archives onto mp3 players.[11]

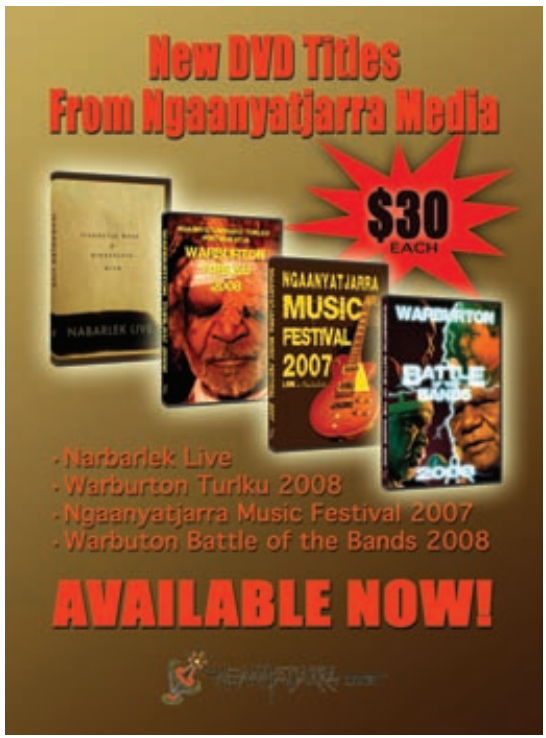
When we make a song we just get a pen and a paper then write the song down, write the meaning and all that, right meaning. We make sure if it's right, correct spelling and all that… Then we check it, make sure if it's right, then we put it on, record it. We record it on the computer, first we make the song right then we sing it. You press the red button that says record, press that. Then you record the voice. Then after when you finish you press stop. Then you can go back and listen to it. Press play. That's recorded there and you just listen to it. We'll practice a couple of times before we put it on, before we record it. If we're not happy we just leave it there or sometimes we just put it in the trash, just that track. Song, whole song sometimes or track.

CHRIS REID
WINGELLINA COMMUNITY, 2008

Multimedia productions provide insights into how Indigenous youth are symbolising and expressing their shared experiences and practices as a generational cohort. The visual, creative nature of multimedia work illuminates the cultural practices and symbol structures in image and language that young people are using for identity formation. Openly displayed are the systems of cultural meaning that shape their awareness. Multiple meanings are embedded in the language used by young people. Through the incorporation of intercultural elements young people are forming 'semiotic reconstructions' (Pennycook 2003: 527) and forging new cultural identities, perspectives and understandings. They are challenging stereotypes and creating less bounded constructs of Aboriginality. Through their use of dress, gesture, visual symbolism and performative modes in their representations of individual or group identity, young people are not replicating the past, but creating new forms.

Song composition represents perhaps the most pertinent example of contemporary forms of youth engagement with oral and written texts in the post-school years. Songs recorded by the musicians on *GarageBand* are transcribed and translated from the vernacular to English as text for CD covers by those with the literacy skills,

DVD TITLES FROM NGAANYATJARRA MEDIA



generating pride in Aboriginal language and identity. Natalie O'Toole is literate in English and Pitjantjatjara. She has assisted with transcribing and translating the songs for the *Alunytjuru Band* CDs. She uses *iTunes* to create a playlist of the songs. She listens to each song, transcribes it and then translates it, checking the Pitjantjatjara-English Dictionary as she goes.

The content of songs (and other texts including films) produced by remote youth form a repertoire of persistent and predictable Aboriginal themes (such as mobility and looking after kin and country). Songs produced by young people at Wingellina provide insights into how they are reflecting on current circumstances and, moreover, visualising and constructing a positive sense of self, projecting pride in their linguistic and cultural identity and taking responsibility for looking after the land inherited from their elders. As Chris and Nathan explain:

> Music is our way to give a strong message…looking after our sacred areas and waterholes and grandfathers' land, that's a strong message, like so younger generation can see that, and listen to that, and understand what the message is.

At Ngaanyatjarra Media young musicians are merging the intercultural elements of Indigenous language, gesture and style with global youth culture and English, thus forging and expressing new cultural perspectives, understandings and identities. In this way we are witnessing a blend of cultural continuity, innovation and transformation across the generations. Moreover,

Well with my husband I help him write in Pitjantjatjara and in English…because I can write faster than him, well that's how I see it! And like, I'm like a teacher to him, but he can read and write in English and he can read in Pitjantjatjara, but only little bit of writing, yeah. 'Cause in Wingellina it's mixed up, it's in Western Australia but they speaking Pitjantjatjara. Some talking Ngaanyatjarra 'cause they from Ngaanyatjarra Land.

NATALIE O'TOOLE
WINGELLINA COMMUNITY, 2008

enterprise is being generated out of the young people's connection to kin and country and their responsibility to look after the land.

Ngura Alunytjuru
(Our country Alunytjuru)

Long time ago when I was young my
grandfather showed me the places
I still remember the Dreamtime
waterhole he showed me in the past
What a beautiful place to get the water
from, Alunytjuru-la
What a beautiful place he showed me,
I'll never forget[12]

Anangu tjuta
(All the people)

Anangu tjuta kukaku ananyi putiku kukaku.
Anangu tjuta kurunpa pukulpa wirura ngurangka.
Manta wirunya ngayuku.
Nganampa ngura wirunya.
Anangu tjuta ngurangka nyinanyi.
Tjukurpa putitja nintini.
Kamilu, tjamulu manta ungkutja nganananya wirura.

All the people going hunting out bush for meat.
All the people their spirit is alive happily at home.
My land is beautiful.
Our home is beautiful.
All the people at home teaching bush stories.
Our grandparents gave this land to us to look after.[13]

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 7:
A SPACE TO DEVELOP AND ENGAGE IN ENTERPRISE

In the research sites we found successful economic enterprises generated by youth and the community themselves, often around shared cultural belief systems where both material and 'symbolic' production (Bourdieu 1984) is valued. Indigenous cultural connection is at the core of many enterprise ventures. The cultural values that determine youth aspirations are inclusive of caring for kin and country and transmitting knowledge to the next generation. Where activities are tied to meaningful community projects, we are seeing youth engaging as the mediators and facilitators of cultural productions in collaborative, intergenerational activities that positively affirm their contemporary Indigenous identity.

Djilpin Arts is unique in that it emphasises both youth learning and enterprise development as priority areas. Typically, Aboriginal arts centres in remote Australia bring in specialists from outside to run their centres. Djilpin Arts is an Aboriginal organisation and the community wants real ownership of the centre, which means employing local people and providing local enterprise options and pathways. The main enterprise focus is the Culture Centre, a pivotal social and cultural site where there is activity and a sense of things happening. Older people are the traditional artists and artefact makers. They can sell their work to the Culture Centre and receive an immediate cash payment, whereas young adults have few of these skills. Finding

'BUSH' BEAUTY PRODUCTS BROCHURE ©DJILPIN ARTS

enterprise-generating activities for young people is an economic necessity. At the Ghunmarn Culture Centre enterprise and employment are generated out of young people's connection to kin, country and traditional practices. There are insufficient arts worker positions for the number of young women requesting employment, so a café and beauty products enterprise (making soap, lip balm and candles out of natural bush medicines and plants) has been established as an income generating project for young people. Augustina works part-time at the culture centre and supplements her income making beauty products:

> I was learning about that soap, bush honey soap, candles…When tourists come to buy something I learn about that and I've learned about how to sell soap. I know how you use computer, EFTPOS, and I know how to write down catalogue, when they buy something what number go on and write that down. I wanna keep working here.

The marketing of the beauty products is aimed at satiating a European Australian market for 'authentic' Indigenous products and the young women are well able to deliver products to meet the market requirements for quality and presentation. Here young women have a modern role that connects them with the knowledge of the past. Hence they have agency in the production of beauty products that are both modern and attractive to tourists, *and* meaningful within the local context. They, like the young filmmakers, music producers, festival organisers and oral historians, have developed skills that are of recognised value and can in many cases generate an income.

AUGUSTINA KENNEDY MAKING COFFEE AT GHUNMARN CULTURE CENTRE
PHOTO: YOUTH LEARNING PROJECT

DESIGN PRINCIPLE 8
A SPACE TO ENGAGE WITH THE WORLD

Throughout this book our interpretation of the context and the findings has been shaped by our anthropological orientation. From this perspective it is impossible to ignore the reality that for many remote youth a close and meaningful relationship with the traditional past has been maintained. It has been suggested (Brooks 2011) that the Ngaanyatjarra and other Western Desert groups share a world of meaning that derives from the *tjukurrpa* (the 'Dreaming') and this is still manifest in the way in which they interpret many aspects of the world. Moreover, irrespective of their contemporary demeanour, Western Desert youth have imbibed this world view from their elders and maintain an underlying cultural propensity for what Brooks (2011) calls '*tjukurrpa*-thinking' in everyday life. Such a worldview is present in each of the sites in which we worked. Simultaneously, however, these young people are immersed in the 'global cultural flow' (Appadurai 1996).

The young people we have worked with and have described in this book are not rejecting culture. Access to elders and traditional knowledge remains a vital part of what matters to them. Rather, they are seeking new ways of expressing a contemporary Indigenous identity. They are change agents, drawing on pre-existing knowledge and skills drawn from being members of the local community, but also seeking to know more about the outside world. They are mediating between old knowledge and new technologies and creating contemporary forms of cultural production. Through music, theatre, film and various social media, Indigenous youth are engaging with the world. Through these means they showcase their skills and creations and cultures. There is always some element of risk in opening new doors, but young people appear to discount that risk in their desire to tell their stories, to communicate and learn. Their experience is one in which their own culture is preserved and celebrated, yet they actively and consciously engage with the world in a way their grandparents could never have envisaged. Accordingly, their entry into learning spaces and their engagement with productive learning is at once transformative and affirming.

In addition, productions by youth are helping to counter negative public perceptions associated with Indigenous youth in remote communities. Writing and production *by youth* rather than *about youth* provide insights into how these young people are reflecting on their circumstances, projecting their futures and developing their own style. Importantly they indicate that young people are visualising and constructing a positive sense of self (Bauman and Briggs 1990). Gaining control of the technology and being able to manipulate the medium and the images themselves means that there is no longer 'some outsider recording them', so young people are in control of their own self-representation. Interestingly, many productions by youth (writing, images, films, songs) developed independently or with peers, with little adult or non-Aboriginal direction or intervention, tend to express a humorous, joyful,

love of life and validate who they are. As Anna Cadden (Interview 2009) notes:

> I think so much of the media attention and films and docos, everything that is made *about* remote communities is always hard line, strong messages. Whereas you look at films made from the community and it's this joy of life sort of stuff.

Wider viewings of films online and at festivals or conferences are allowing young people to position themselves as productive contributors in the national and international domain. As we have mentioned, young people are uploading productions to websites such as *YouTube* and alerting each other on *Facebook*. In addition community-generated media productions are broadcast as free to air local community broadcasts, or on ICTV and IndigiTube, as well as the Remote Indigenous Media Organisations (RIMOs) and their websites.[14] The majority of films and videos produced by remote youth are in local Indigenous vernacular/s and incorporate translated subtitles in English. Such productions are an important vehicle for language and culture revival, maintenance and transmission. While some national platforms exist for the broadcasting of youth productions in local languages (e.g. through NITV; ABC Open; and Yarning Up), there remains a strong need for local community broadcasting services such as ICTV (Rennie and Featherstone 2008).

The festival is fun, everybody dances, everybody works, everybody's involved in it... They hang out there, everybody hangs out there. If we run some kind of music workshop with the old guys on the veranda of the red house there'll be 20 young guys coming around hanging out to be part of it.

FLEUR PARRY
GENERAL MANAGER
DJILPIN ARTS, 2008

Festivals such as the biannual *Milpirri Festival* at Lajamanu, the annual *Walking with Spirits Festival* at Beswick, the *Turlku Purtingkatja* music festivals in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands, the *Bush Bands Bash* in Alice Springs or the annual Remote Media Festivals[15] provide opportunities to consolidate the intergenerational connection between performance, cultural tradition and community wellbeing. These events are sites for the regeneration of a strong cultural identity and offer a rare chance for collaboration and exchange between Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants.

The *Walking with Spirits Festival,* for example, deftly weaves together culture, performance and enterprise. A high profile regional event, it blends the intergenerational transfer of Indigenous tradition and the cross-cultural sharing of music, dance and visual and material arts. Over the Festival weekend in August 2009, some 200 visitors passed through the Cultural Centre where the sale of art and coffees generated significant income. Augustina worked on the coffee machine in the outside cafe both days, while Revonna worked inside the Culture Centre talking to visitors and selling art: taking cash, EFTPOS or credit cards, giving change and receipts, printing out certificates and packing artwork. In the evening all the young people worked on the festival helping backstage and showed their recent media productions.

Festivals provide an opportunity for young people to set their minds to producing music or theatre performances or films. Often this is innovative work that will showcase their skills. Such events incorporate an element of risk. It is at festivals that young people are able to display performances that are representative of continuity, transformation and innovation and these performances are celebrated by all and affirm a contemporary Indigenous identity.[16] Importantly, all these settings provide a space for young people to express their contemporary Indigenous identity and engage with the world on their own terms.

As we mentioned at the beginning of this volume, the potential of Indigenous youth in remote Australia and the projects they engage in often lies unacknowledged. In the final section of this book we draw some conclusions and discuss how to better support youth learning and sustainable outcomes for successful optimistic futures in remote Australia.

Chapter 4 endnotes

1. Jane Leonard, pers. comm., June 2008.
2. The relationship between public libraries, youth development and lifelong learning has been established in the United States (Rothbauer et al. 2011).
3. See Kral (2012).
4. The new recording studio at the Wilurarra Creative youth arts project in Warburton is also a multigenerational site. Older musicians transfer cultural authority and rights over their song recordings to emerging artists, and work with the technical expertise of the younger generation to record music in the digital environment, while children hover on the periphery developing their musical skills through observation and imitation (Kral 2011a).
5. Daniel Featherstone, pers. comm., June 2009.
6. **http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fd4pQaRa9EI&feature=related**
7. The lingua franca for the region is the English-based creole known as 'Roper River Kriol' (Sandefur 1979).
8. Jane Leonard, pers. comm., June 2008.
9. Assessments made by Inge Kral in collaboration with Ngapartji Ngapartji using *The National Reporting System* (Coates et al. 1995) as an assessment tool.
10. *Yapa-kurlangu Yimi.* Mt Theo-Yuendumu Substance Misuse Aboriginal Corporation December 2006 Newsletter.
11. Jason Gibson, pers. comm., March 2008.
12. Lyrics: Chris Reid and Nathan Brown. © Alunytjuru Band 'Wati Kutju', Ngaanyatjarra Media.
13. Lyrics: Rosaria Scales. Singers: Hinerangi Tukere, Natalie O'Toole and Rosaria Scales. © Turlku 3, Ngaanyatjarra Media.
14. See ICTV: **http://www.ictv.net.au/** and internet sites: **http://www.indigitube.com.au/**, **http://www.pawmedia.com.au/**, **http://www.djilpinarts.org.au/digital/index.html**
15. **http://remotemedia.wikispaces.com/FESTIVAL+2011**
16. See Handleman (1990) for a discussion on the role of public events and performances for skills development in young people.