



## “Yarri Wada” - “Many Dreamings”

What has been happening since the Yarri Wada Puppet Project was officially launched at the Zonta International District 23 Board Meeting in Perth on 26 July 2008?

The women of the Ngarinyin, Wunambal and Worrorra clans have been turning dreams into ideas—ideas into strategies—strategies into programs!

The Yarri Wada project this year will be run out of Mowunjum, a community close to Derby at the beginning of the Gibb River Road.

The making of puppets, and storytelling through them, will form a central feature of a program designed to provide an ongoing service to educate young women in a directed, controlled and safe environment. In Mowunjum, and with the help of District 23 clubs, a safe place will be created where women, young and old, will learn to address everyday issues that affect their communities.

The first program, *Monorngungga—Stepping Forward with Pride*, is about to begin in the Mowanjum community in the Kimberley on Monday 6 April 2009.

### ***Monorngungga – Stepping Forward with Pride***

This is a young women’s project teaching sexual health and wellbeing to young people aged 10-16.

Program leaders are Beryl Davis, Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Derby Health Service; Estelle Umbagai, Mowanjum community member and program designer; and Angela Fisher, Child Health Nurse, Kimberley Public Health Unit.

These amazing ladies have recently undertaken a certified course in sexual health and positive life skills training.

The course provided training in getting young people to talk about puberty, body image and sexual issues in a group environment and making learning about sexual health an engaging experience for Aboriginal young people approaching puberty.

This is just one example of how our District 23 project is assisting Indigenous women gain education and training to address issues in their communities.

This is the first program in a series of programs to be conducted over a six month period and they are all intended to look at important issues involving young girls of the community.

The series has been compiled from a number of resources – other programs, specific needs of the community, research findings – and has been adapted to suit the skills and resources of the program coordinators, the available facilities and the critical needs of the young girls involved.

At the outset, the course content is explained to parents who will need to give permission for their girls to participate.

*Stepping Forward with Pride* aims to:

- deliver a safe and professional health program
- develop skills and knowledge in program delivery



*One of the program leaders is Leah Umbagai a well respected, vibrant young artist from the Mowanjum community.*

Major sponsor



## “Yarri Wada- Many Dreamings” continued

- understand the needs of the young girls to further develop the proposed ongoing program.

*Stepping Forward with Pride* hopes to

- have a well-attended course that young girls find relevant to their lives
- gather evidence to support the need for a long term commitment of a youth worker within the community
- gather feedback from young people on what their needs are and
- empower them to be part of the ongoing decision-making process for the Mowanjum youth health program.

The first program runs for 6 weeks between 6 April and 11 May 2009, with meetings on Monday nights from 6.00 to 9.00 pm at the Mowanjum Women's Centre.

The environment is congenial and safe, the equipment and resources are simple but fun and the atmosphere is supportive and encouraging.



Yarri Wada Project co co-ordinator, Sciona Browne (left) discusses program options with Angie Fisher at the Community Health Centre in Derby

### Goals of the Program in 2009

- To continue to develop the creativity of the puppet project as a vehicle to transfer cultural knowledge
- Create health promotional material that is useful to the education of young people
- Motivate men in the community to provide a similar program for the boys

### Topics and activities suggested by Indigenous women for inclusion in Yarri Wada 2009:

- Self defence
- Sexual health
- School education
- Home maintenance and budgeting
- Protecting yourself against abuse – physical, sexual, verbal, emotional and financial
- Personal hygiene
- Grooming and deportment
- Dance
- Yarning stories (the art of storytelling)
- Cultural ways
- Pregnancy
- Art
- Mental health – depression
- Cooking
- First aid
- Language
- Exposure to Indigenous women who are role models

## Yarri Wada Puppet Project—where are the puppets?

Yarri Wada is a unique project in that it is able to respond quickly to a dynamic environment in a way that other projects cannot. The magical thing about Yarri Wada is that it is inspiring local leaders to take ownership of the project and develop the project in the way that works best in their communities.

It is a sign of the project's strength that it is being driven by the local community—something that very rarely happens in Indigenous communities.

For example, during discussions with our Ngarinyin friends, the experience from the puppet making phase of the project highlighted the need for leaders to have the skills and knowledge to train future puppeteers

to deliver the important messages relating to health, culture and life skills.

Our leaders needed training practice and our future puppeteers needed to be well-informed and confident about a wide range of issues. The very process of training the young women is giving the leadership team vital skills for managing future puppet activities.

The *Stepping Forward with Pride* course is a vital stage in the long term viability of the project. Puppetry skill workshops will be woven into the program to develop skills and knowledge in performance.

So the puppets are not forgotten. They are still considered to be

excellent tools to deliver sensitive messages to people of all ages.

However, they are just having a bit of a rest after their display at the International “Million Puppets Festival” held in Perth last year.



Leah (left) and Aneka dismantle one of the puppets after the International Million Puppets event in Perth.



## Mowanum Community—50th Anniversary

The Mowanum Community is a registered Aboriginal Corporation located 10 km from Derby on the Gibb River Road. There are about 300 residents based in the community and also in seven outstations that stretch between the Buccaneer Archipelago and the Kimberley Plateau that rely on Mowanum for their resources.

The Wandjina is the supreme spirit being of the Wororra, Ngarinyin and Wanambul people who have settled at Mowanum. The Wandjina's image is reflected in the architecture of the local Art and Cultural centre as well as in the art of the region.

Members of the Zonta Club of Perth have visited the community and experienced the vibrant Mowanum festival that takes place in July each year.

If you are ever in the Kimberley the Art and Cultural Centre is



*The Mowanum Art and Cultural centre is built in the shape of a Wandjina—the spirit that guides and connects the communities in the region.*

worth a visit as it features an art gallery, artist's studio, museum and theatre which educates audiences about the culture of the Mowanum people.

Recently Mowanum celebrated its 50th Anniversary and a book has been produced to celebrate this milestone. The book was launched at the University of Western Australia and costs \$55.



### MOWANJUM

50 years community history

on sale at

Mowanum Arts Center (08)91911008  
www.mowanumarts.com

Fremantle Press (08)94306331  
www.fremantlepress.com.au

and selected bookstores

## What's going on behind the scenes...

The Coordinators of the District 23 Yarri Wada Puppet Project, Sciona Browne and Fiona Crowe, have concentrated their efforts over the months since the launch of the project on two main aspects: promotion and co-ordination.

### Promotion

Firstly, promotion. They have made several presentations to government and non-government organizations with the view to securing further sponsors, finding out what other compatible projects and funds are "out there" and involving as many people in discussion of the project as possible. Talking up the story!

### Co-ordination

Secondly, coordination. Having identified the project managers in the Kimberley, they have been working with them to develop the concepts, to identify the priorities, to make a plan, to set time lines and to engage the community.

All this - at great distance – during the wet season— through various communication channels – and with patience and encouragement!

Meanwhile their lives and work commitments go on and so the Yarri Wada Puppet Project is now at the stage where they have sought to establish an

administrative committee of club members to support them. This will enable them to concentrate on those two areas of Promotion and Co-ordination.

They would very much like to invite one or two of the Project Managers from Mowanum to attend the District 23 Conference in Ballarat in September 2009.

This would provide an opportunity for Zontians to hear first hand about this unique project that is making such a difference to the lives of many young and not-so-young women in the Kimberley.

## Honour Board

Since the Project was launched in July 2008 and until March 2009,  
\$30250 has been raised by supporters.  
A HUGE THANK YOU TO ALL CONTRIBUTORS

EON Foundation	20000
Zonta Club of Perth	2000
Sandy McGregor and family	500
Zonta Club of Adelaide	500
Zonta Club of Adelaide Flinders Inc	500
Zonta Club of Adelaide Hills Inc	500
Zonta Club of Adelaide Torrens	500
Zonta Club of Alice Springs	500
Zonta Club of Bendigo Inc	500
Zonta Club of Devonport	500
Zonta Club of Dunsborough Area	500
Zonta Club of Fleurieu Peninsula	500
Zonta Club of Frankston Inc	500
Zonta Club of Kyneton Inc	500
Zonta Club of Port Lincoln	500
Zonta Club of the Riverland Inc	500
Zonta Club of Swan Hills Inc	500
Zonta Club of Wangaratta	250
Zonta Club of Para District Area Inc	250
<b>Total</b>	<b>30250</b>

## Project Partners

Yarri Wada integrates with other organisations in the region, synergising resources so that together we can develop meaningful, sustainable relationships that will provide for the longterm benefit of the community. Project partners so far include:

- Zonta Clubs of District 23
- Mowanjum Community, through the community steering group
- Mowanjum Aboriginal Spirit of the Wandjina Artists Cooperative (MASWAC)
- Department of Health WA
- United First Peoples Australia (UFPA)
- Beyond Blue

In total, the clubs of District 23 have to date contributed \$10,500 to the project.

This money will now be used as seed funding for the *Stepping Forward with Pride* stage of the project and will be matched by UFPA and the Health Department with money and in-kind support.

Further donations from our clubs and funding from government and private organizations and individuals will support the next stage that will see the development and launch of a range of health promotion materials.

Senior women artists in the participating communities have also pledged to donate artworks to be sold to raise money for the project. All funds raised via the sale of Indigenous artwork will go directly to the project, with no administrative fees charged or commissions paid.

**If you would like to donate to the Yarri Wada Project, please send your cheque payable to the Zonta Club of Perth Inc to  
PO Box 237  
Nedlands WA 6909**