



The District 23 Yarri Wada Puppet Project is co-ordinated by the Zonta Club of Perth Inc [www.zontaperth.org.au](http://www.zontaperth.org.au)

## Lotterywest funding ensures the spirit of Yarri Wada continues

**First the big news! The ground breaking work achieved through the District 23 Yarri Wada Project will be continued for at least two years thanks to some committed Zontians who have been able to obtain a grant for Aus\$230,307 from Lotterywest, the official state lottery for Western Australia.**

The project will move forward under the name '**ILERLA**' - meaning 'young youth'. It targets youth in the remote Kimberley region of Western Australia who live in environments where there are high levels of alcohol abuse, drug abuse and violence.

These issues are key contributors to a breakdown in family values and high levels of cultural kinship relationship abuse.

Youth are also at high risk of abuse by outsiders, especially predatory, sexual abusers who see the stress of the Aboriginal children and youth in the community as an opportunity to exploit them.

The **Ilerla Project** faces head-on many issues that are often swept under the carpet.

**Ilerla** is the brainchild of senior Aboriginal women within communities from the Gibb River Station to Mowunjum: women of the Worrora, Wunubal and Ngarinyin language groups who identified the need to develop and support the leadership of younger indigenous women in building strong, healthy communities and families.

**Ilerla, and the projects it was developed from, are very special as they were designed and implemented by indigenous women for indigenous people.**

**Ilerla** grew from the experience gained from:

- The *Yarri Wada Puppet Project* where professional puppeteers conducted 'bush puppetry schools' resulting in 19 Aboriginal women receiving formal art qualifications



*Thanks to the work of Yarri Wada project coordinators, Sciona Browne (L) and Fiona Crowe (R) in bringing everything together, the children of the Kimberley may have a brighter, safer future.*

and two 4-5 metre high puppets being created and displayed at the 2008 World Puppet Festival; and

- The *Monorngungga Walking Forward with Pride Project* that in 2009 educated young girls in the Mowanjum Aboriginal Community in health, life skills and Aboriginal culture.

Organisational and financial support for these projects was provided initially by the Zonta Club of Perth and the EON Foundation. Between 2008-2010, the Yarri Wada Puppet Project operated as a District 23 Project with many Zonta clubs in District 23 contributing funds for the programs.

At the beginning of 2010, a more extensive program, building on previous success, was piloted and was jointly funded by the Unity of First People of Australia (UFGA) and the Zonta Clubs of District 23, with additional support and input provided by numerous community organisations (see page 2).

The **Ilerla Project** employs and supports a local indigenous Project Manager, Leah Umbagai, to bring together indigenous and non-indigenous healthcare workers, education and service providers to run programs that increase the capacity of families to be safe and healthy.

*(continued page 2)*

Major sponsor



**From page 1...**

**Ilerla** gives small mouths bigger voices to be heard by:

- engaging the community around child and youth issues;
- encouraging the safe, healthy development of children;
- building youth self esteem and self confidence; and
- enabling youth to speak out.

Leah Umbagai (pictured below left), the Project Manager, will implement a range of programs to promote family and community competence around meeting children's needs.

Through the **Ilerla** initiatives, families will be better able to protect their children, promote opportunities for their children to set and achieve their goals, and build a strong positive environment.

**Ilerla** will help to create home environments and communities that



The Mowanjum Community of 260 people is located at the Derby end of the Gibb River Road, nearly 2,000 km from Perth.

Project Coordinator, Leah Umbagai (below left) is also a talented artist. The Mowanjum's Arts Centre (below right) is built in the shape of the Wandjina—the supreme spirit of the Wororra, Ngarinyin and Wanumbul people who have settled at Mowanjum.



are child-friendly and safe so that children will be able to learn through play and healthy relationships.

The **Ilerla Project** is based at the Mowanjum Aboriginal Corporation in the North West Kimberley Region of Western Australia.

Mowanjum is a remote community with a population of approximately 260 people with over half the population being under 25 years of age. From Mowanjum, **Ilerla** will offer programs to other, even more remote, communities all along the Gibb River Road.

**Ilerla partners provide specialised assistance**

The **Ilerla Project** partners with a diverse range of individuals and organisations to ensure an integrated approach to achieving better health and education outcomes for Mowanjum and surrounding indigenous communities. Partners include:

- **Community Elders** from the Wororra, Ngarinyin and Wunumbul tribes who will continue to share cultural knowledge and skills; provide an understanding of the Law; and share stories and the lifestyle attributes of the ancestors;
- **True Blue Dreaming** who will deliver a mentoring program to train youth to empower youth to set and achieve goals and develop a sense of value, identity and purpose;
- The **Rainbow Program** that focuses on children from kindergarten to Year 12 who are grieving. It encourages emotional literacy and builds self esteem. It also offers individual crisis

- counseling. The **Ilerla Project** Manager has received training and ongoing support from the Program.
- The **David Wirrpanda Foundation** that will assist with programs designed to build youth confidence and self esteem;
- Pamela Hunter, the Manager of **Aboriginal Healthwork** who will help deliver protective behaviour strategies that support safety in communities;
- The **Police** through the Child Protection Unit who will give advice and direction on how to protect children at-risk. The local Police run a community policing program that offers kids an understanding of what happens if they disclose child sexual abuse;
- **Mooditj** that will continue to provide training and advice on delivering creative learning programs around sexual wellbeing for all target groups;
- **Kimberley Paediatrics Team** who will continue to provide mentoring for the **Ilerla Project** Manager around

- situations where there is disclosure of sexual abuse;
- **Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services (KAMS)** that will provide programs on personal hygiene;
- **Community Health** that will be involved in the delivery of programs associated with suicide prevention, hygiene and first aid;
- **Standby Me** that will assist in strategies for suicide prevention;
- **Nunga Women's Workshops** run by the **Ilerla Project** Manager on women's issues, that will provide "play and learn" sessions for babies and mums;
- **St John Ambulance** that will provide CPR training and other first aid programs;
- Further expert advice will continue to be provided by Professor John Boulton, Senior Regional Paediatrician, **Kimberley Health**; Emeritus Professor Freda Briggs AO, **University of South Australia** and staff of **Curtin University**.  
What a team!

## Ilerla programs in action

Leah Umbagai, the **Ilerla Project** Manager, lives and works in the Mowanjum Community. She uses her close links with the community to ensure high participation levels. Programs run repeatedly in intensive two day or one week blocks and in stages over six to eight weeks.

### Community Engagement in Health and Education Programs

Children, youth, young adults, young parents, mothers, fathers and grandparents will benefit by participating in programs that promote a pride in strong cultural identity and teach life skills side-by-side with traditional values and practices.

**Ilerla** promotes the speaking of local language and takes young people into country with their elders to learn about their culture. Programs involve cross-generational input and are developed by engaging the community in designing and delivering relevant content.

### Children's Programs

The **Ilerla Project** delivers a routine, weekly schedule of safe events and activities for children and youth to broaden their thinking and provide models for positive lifestyles and skills to make good decisions for the future. This environment will enable them to: speak out and gain confidence to learn and engage successfully with education, make healthy life decisions, enjoy positive and good relationships and be aware of the dangers in the community and in society. Children are engaged in activities that assist them articulate their feelings and communicate their needs effectively.

### Children's After School Activities

The **Ilerla Project** provides after school activities designed to cultivate self esteem, positive self image and better educational and emotional outcomes through:

- art workshops that provide a space to be creative, learn cultural stories, develop self expression;
- drop-in centre for homework and interactive learning around healthy eating and dental hygiene;
- puppet theatre activities that build upon a previous project and



*These young girls at Mowanjum have already benefited from the pilot phase of the Ilerla Project.*

- encourage both non-verbal and verbal communication to tell personal stories and raise concerns;
- "in-country" camps to learn culture and build strong identity and sense of place;
- Performance Art workshops where children create a unique self expression and confidence culminating in a public performance at the Mowanjum Arts Festival;
- traditional dance afternoons that also include Zamba and Columbian Salsa; and
- a weekly "kids club" that incorporates a sleep-over from Friday night for those children who are unsafe at home on weekends.

### Other Activities for Children

Input is sought from Beyond Empathy and Head Space to assist children deal with emotional and physical trauma and understand the resources available to them. In addition, indigenous role models are being sought to visit the community and open up opportunities for children to see an exciting future for themselves;.

In all areas, key life, health and cultural messages are being developed that underpin and frame all aims and activities.

### School Holidays

In the school holidays the Project Manager organises adults to assist her provide outings and activities for the children to expose them to ideas for a positive lifestyle and get away from town with its risk of drugs, alcohol and participation in crime. Cultural care within the Project also

includes developing a portfolio for each child in which the child learns about his/her cultural ancestry and cultural relationships. This then enables the child to develop knowledge of his/her country and cultural stories. The portfolio gets children to include photographs, draw a family tree, depict family totems and relationships. This is the root of individual and community identity for an indigenous person.

### Programs for Youth at Risk

Leah Umbagai and several women from the community have completed the Mooditj program in sex education and life skills. Leah delivers the program in the local high school once a week to 15-18 year olds who are at high risk of unplanned pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and breakdown in mental health. The program aims at assisting youth at risk reconnect with their education and build resilience.

### Navigating Puberty

**Ilerla** programs help youth to identify those people and organisations who can assist them navigate puberty more safely and help children and youth to understand themselves through various stages in life. It also increases awareness around sexually transmitted infections and gives them the benefits and capability to be strong and stand up for their own rights as an individual.

### Bush Training

The Kimberley Land Council (KLC) has been engaged to take boys and girls on a bush training trip as part of the rangers program that monitors the environment and the animals on the land. The rangers also manage the country using traditional management techniques including controlled burning and care of land. This program aims to develop knowledge of country, bush skills, self confidence and interest in the ranger program, which may lead to employment in the future. KLC is supporting the program by providing fuel and the food for the group to participate.

*(continued page 4)*

## Ilerla programs continued

### Young Mothers and Fathers

The Project Manager will continue to run weekly Nunga Women's Workshops which cover a range of women's issues and also provide a space for young fathers to understand their role in growing up strong, healthy children. Working closely with health care and education providers, programs target mothers and fathers alike in providing access to education around healthy parenting. The program offers adults education around the following:

- nutrition for the critical first two years of life;
- building a foundation for healthy relationships in two to three year olds;
- the importance of early learning and play in three to five year olds;
- encouraging engagement in pre-school activities;
- the importance of homework and home support for schooling; and
- puberty, adolescence and safe relationships.

## Zonta's ongoing role

The **Ilerla Project** will be administered on a day-to-day basis by the Unity of First People of Australia. However, the Zonta Club of Perth will be represented on the Community Reference Group and will continue to provide in-kind support and encouragement for the program. In addition, the club will also assist with seeking funding to sustain the program beyond the next two years.

The **Ilerla Project** is required to report to the Community Reference Group every two months and the Zonta Club of Perth will provide updates on its website at [www.zontaperth.org.au](http://www.zontaperth.org.au).

## Special Tribute



A special thank you goes to Kathy Charlesworth, a photo-journalist who has lived with, worked with and been an advocate for the Aboriginal people in the Kimberley for over 30 years.

Kathy was the bridge between the two cultures and it was through her in 2004, that the Zonta Club of Perth first met and became friends with senior Ngarinyin law women in the Kimberley. This friendship now includes women from the Ngarinyin, Worrora and Wunambul clans and key people such as community nurse Angie Fisher, who have helped turn dreams into reality.

THANK YOU KATHY—without you, **Ilerla** would not have been possible!

## Honour Board

EON Foundation	20,000
Zonta Club of Perth Inc	4,000
Zonta Club of Frankston Inc	1,100
Zonta Club of Adelaide Hills Inc	1,000
Zonta Club of Bunbury	1,000
Zonta Club of Devonport Inc	1,000
Zonta Club of Fleurieu Peninsula Inc	1,000
Zonta Club of Perth Northern Suburbs Inc	1,000
Zonta Club of Alice Springs Inc	800
Sandy McGregor and family	500
Zonta Club of Adelaide Flinders Inc	500
Zonta Club of Adelaide Torrens Inc	500
Zonta Clubs of Area 5 (Tasmania)	500
Zonta Club of Bendigo Inc	500
Zonta Club of Dunsborough Area Inc	500
Zonta Club of Gawler Inc	500
Zonta Club of Kyneton Inc	500
Zonta Club of Peel Inc	500
Zonta Club of Port Lincoln Inc	500
Zonta Club of the Riverland Inc	500
Zonta Club of Swan Hills Inc	500
Zonta Club of Wangaratta Inc	500
Zonta Club of Melbourne on Yarra Inc	435
Zonta Club of Para District Inc	250
Zonta Club of Melton Inc	200
Total	38,285

For the full Yarri Wada story visit  
[www.zontaperth.org.au](http://www.zontaperth.org.au)