

MEDIA RELEASE

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Local kids share the practice of Indigenous culture

Students and community Elders from Mitchell shared their cultural connections with water, with a trip to The Yumba last week.

Meaning 'old camp', The Yumba is Indigenous-owned and managed land near Mitchell holding significant cultural importance as 'a special place' of healing for the Indigenous people.

A feature of the Yumba is 'Alice's Billabong', a vital water habitat for the local Indigenous community, and a source of interest for students as the nation's priorities turn to the importance of our water.

With this focus in mind, Fiona Wellington, Indigenous Regional Coordinator for local natural resource management group, the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee (QMDC) organised and supported students to learn from local Elders about the significance of water in their community.

"The purpose of the day was to encourage the younger generation to acknowledge and express their cultural connection with water through art, and to reinforce the importance of water and how we care for the valuable cultural resource into the future," said Fiona.

Local community Elder, Aunty Irene Ryder, hosted the 16 students, and shared with them the cultural values associated with water on the Yumba since the 1930s.

QMDC Education Officer, Pam Fisher, who also attended the day, said that Aunty Irene told students how attitudes of the Indigenous community towards water were very respectful, being careful not to waste water and valuing its cultural and practical importance.

"Aunty Irene told us how she was amazed by the introduction of the tap, and how she and her brother could only laugh the first time they used one, attracting the anger of their Elders for being so wasteful," said Pam.

The day also featured a number of activities harnessing students' connections with water, including water bug monitoring, an Indigenous art workshop and a cultural walk.

"We all shared the cultural significance of 'The Yumba', and the Mitchell State School students discussed the value of sustainably managing this beautiful cultural resource into the future," said Fiona.

"The day was a tremendous success, and we'll be looking forward to spending more time with the students in the near future," she said.

“We now hope that, with continued support from QMDC’s Learning Through Landcare program, Mitchell State School will undertake monitoring activities of ‘Alice’s Billabong’, assisting in the long-term management of the site,” said Pam.

Some of the artwork produced on the day will be presented at QMDC’s annual Discovering Landcare Conference, to be held in Toowoomba on 15 and 16 October 2006.

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Media contact/s

Released by:

Pam Fisher, Education Officer, QMDC, 07 4622 2993

More information:

Fiona Wellington, Indigenous Program - Regional Coordinator, QMDC, 0428 180 600



Caption: Wayne Dodd with children from the Mitchell State School



Caption: A group of happy artists at the Yumba



Caption: A Mitchell student expresses her cultural connections with water using the QMDC Indigenous Program coordinator Fiona Wellington as the canvass.

All photos by Pam Fisher

For electronic copies of these photos, please contact Pam Fisher (see above)