CAIRNS INDIGENOUS ART FAIR 2010

Teacher Resource
Dr Ernie Grant's framework provides a holistic approach to Indigenous studies. It includes the following components:

- **Land**
- **Language**
- **Culture**
- **Time**
- **Place**
- **Relationships**

These components are linked together to provide a flexible framework for organizing and presenting topics, including Indigenous perspectives.

**Four Contextual Frames**

**INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES IN THE CURRICULUM**

- **Early Years (P – 5)**: The early years of education are a particularly important time for children to build strong foundations in learning and relationships with others. In the early years, children learn about the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. They engage with a variety of stories, languages, beliefs and cultural practices of Australia’s Indigenous peoples.

- **Middle Years (6 – 9)**: In the middle phase of schooling, students develop an understanding of the perspectives of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and how these are influenced by personal experiences, cultural backgrounds and knowledge. This understanding helps students gain a better appreciation of Australian history and contemporary issues.

- **Senior Years (10 – 12)**: In the senior phase, learners gain an awareness of the contributions of Indigenous Australians at local, regional, national and global levels. They engage with a variety of cultural protocols when working with Indigenous communities within their local area and in the sourcing of Indigenous knowledge. This helps them develop a greater understanding of their own country of origin and the cultural, social and political beliefs that influence Australian identity and society.

**INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES IN THE CURRICULUM**

**The Early Years**

- Children learn about the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. They engage with a variety of stories, languages, beliefs and cultural practices of Australia’s Indigenous peoples.

**The Middle Years**

- Students develop an understanding of the perspectives of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and how these are influenced by personal experiences, cultural backgrounds and knowledge.

**The Senior Years**

- Learners gain an awareness of the contributions of Indigenous Australians at local, regional, national and global levels.

**Dr Ernie Grant's Framework**

One very useful method to work on embedding Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum is My Land My Tracks: A framework for the holistic approach to Indigenous studies, developed by Dr Ernie Grant, Djirrbal/Djirbal Elder and statewide cultural Research Officer, and published by the Ipswich and District Education Centre. According to Dr Grant, “Indigenous communities have a holistic view of their world which incorporates the vital link between Land, Language and Culture.”

This framework uses this holistic approach and can be a useful strategy for teachers and students to gain a deeper understanding of Indigenous subject matter. According to Dr Grant, “Indigenous culture reflects an oral as opposed to a written tradition; it relies largely on observation; it is closely aligned with nature and the environment - with particular emphasis on cycles, patterns and the effect each has on the other; and of course it is based on an undeniable link between Land, Language and Culture.”

When discussing or writing about Indigenous artists we include, as protocol, information about where the artist is from, who their people are and often the language group they belong to. This acknowledges the importance of this information and that it should be considered part of a framework approach to Indigenous studies.

Dr Grant’s framework uses the three elements of Land, Language and Culture and contextualises them into the domains of Time, Place, and Relationships. Linking these six components together can provide a flexible framework for organising and presenting a range of topics, including contemporary Indigenous art and artists.

**Ways to Open Dialogue**

- Describe what you see in the artwork.
- Describe what you think of the artwork.
- Describe the elements and principles used in the composition.

**Ways to Prompt Observation and Discussion**

- Have any images been appropriated and re-contextualised?
- How has the meaning of the work been transferred?
Language: Kayardild
Country: Bentinck Is
Born: circa 1924

Sally Gabori is a senior woman of the Kaiadilt tribe from the South Wellesley Islands in the Southern Gulf of Carpentaria, Queensland. She speaks the Kayardild language. Her tribal name is Mirdidingkingathi Juwarnda. Juwarnda means ‘dolphin’, which is her totemic sign, and Mirdidingkingathi means ‘born at Mirrdiding’, in her country on the south side of Bentinck Island.

She was born around 1924 and lived a completely traditional life, with practically no contact with non-Kaiadilt people, fishing and gathering shellfish and vegetable foods and maintaining the stone fish walls around the shores of Bentinck Island.

This changed in the early 1940s when missionaries transported the entire Kaiadilt population from their tribal lands to the mission on Mornington Island. She then lived on Mornington until the late 1980s when the Kaiadilt began to re-establish themselves on their ancestral lands, building a number of outstations on Bentinck island.

Mother and grandmother to a large family, and the living repository of a wealth of tribal lore, she now lives on Mornington Island. Throughout her life she has been an accomplished producer of traditional handicrafts made from bush products such as pandanus fibres and hibiscus bark woven into string.

Nicholas Rollo David Evans, for Sally Gabori

After a lifetime of weaving and producing fibre craft, Gabori, aged in her early eighties, took up painting and had her first exhibition in 2005.

Gabori’s work reflects the intimate places of her homeland. We can see the rich, vibrant colours of the tropics and the sea that she is so closely connected to. With her expressive brushstrokes, tactile layering of paint and expert use of colour, her work is a glorious celebration and exploration of her country, life and memories.

“Gabori’s paintings have been acclaimed for their articulation of country, although her technical skill is considered equally important. Her paintings have a colourful presence, with fluid brush strokes overlaying solid masses of colour that represent the land, sea and sky. Her brush strokes and colour combinations bring movement and texture to the flat plane of the canvas, representing and replicating the life that surrounds the artist.”


Sally Gabori’s application of paint, in various states of drying, creates striking and interesting clashes of colour and transition and, although produced quickly, her works are carefully planned. Her paintings convey a combination of vitality, immediacy and supreme confidence. The working of paints into and over each other at different stages of the drying process has created differing visual effects — colour fields meet, with wet paints blending together to create soft transitions; and painting over dry sections has created harder and bolder transitions.

(Bruce McLean, ‘Sally Gabori: Intimate country’, in Contemporary Australia: Optimism [exhibition catalogue], Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, 2008, pp.94−)

“Dibirdibi Country”
synthetic polymer paint on linen
121 x 91 cms
Image courtesy of the Artist, Mornington Island Art, Queensland and Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne.
Vernon Ah Kee

unwritten, 2009
Charcoal on paper
76 x 56 cm each
Courtesy the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane.

Although mouthless and mute, the elusively rendered figure in Vernon Ah Kee’s unwritten speaks to the misrepresented or suppressed histories of indigenous nations. Ah Kee, a member of the Kuku Yalandji, Waanji, Yidinji and Gugu Yimithirr peoples, is recognized for his unapologetic and candid explorations of the treatment of Aboriginal people in Australia. In 2009 Ah Kee represented Australia at the Venice Biennale in the exhibition Once Removed and was included in Revolutions: Forms that turn, Biennale of Sydney (2008).

The loosely executed black-on-white charcoal lines of unwritten trace the ominous impression of a face on the verge of perception. It is unclear as to whether the eyeless, earless and mouthless face is moving into or out of visibility and Ah Kee describes the face as depicting a state of “becoming human” in the eyes of white settler society. In its irresolute form, unwritten speaks powerfully and clearly to the struggle between existence and erasure within imperial perceptions of Aboriginal people.

All images are courtesy the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane.

“Ah Kee’s artistic practice has a valuable role in the discourse that is contemporary Aboriginal art. Asserting the authenticity of urban Aboriginal identities and therefore the authenticity of urban Aboriginal cultural production, connects Ah Kee with a proud history of urban Aboriginal activism, a role that arguably has facilitated enormous developments in the awareness and recognition of Aboriginal rights nationally and internationally. Aboriginal art should be as varied as Aboriginal people, and the political strength of Aboriginal art today may be that it is an expression of contemporary Aboriginal sovereignty in action.”

Gary Jones, ‘Vernon Ah Kee: Sovereign Warrior’ in Artlink: Blak on Blak vol. 30 1-2010, pp.50-51

R.E.A.C.H. Teacher Resource
Vernon Ah Kee
Kuku Yalandji, Waanji, Yidinji and Gugu Yimithirr people

Born: Innisfail, Queensland, 1967
Lives & works: Brisbane.

Vernon Ah Kee’s work has been shown nationally and internationally. He represented Australia at the 2009 Venice Biennale in the exhibition Once Removed. Other recent group exhibitions include Revolutions: Forms that turn, Biennale of Sydney (2008); and Putsch, proppaNOW group, Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Adelaide (2010). Recent solo exhibitions include talkwalktalk, Mackenzie Art Gallery, Canada (2009), and cant chant, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane (2007) and touring (2009-10). In 2009, the Institute of Modern Art published borninthisskin, the first major publication devoted to Ah Kee’s practice. Vernon Ah Kee holds a Bachelor of Visual Arts from Queensland College of Art, Griffith University, Brisbane, where he is currently completing his Doctor of Visual Arts. His work is included in public collections including the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; the Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; and the Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane. Vernon Ah Kee is represented by Milani Gallery, Brisbane, Australia.

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Gary Jones, ‘Vernon Ah Kee: Sovereign Warrior’ in Artlink: Blak on Blak vol. 30 1-2010, pp.50-51

R.E.A.C.H. Teacher Resource

EARLY

DISCUSSION
Describe the lines that Vernon Ah Kee has used.

LOOKING
Look for the face in Vernon Ah Kee’s drawing. What parts can you see? What parts are missing?

ACTIVITY
Start with a line in the middle of a page and ‘take it for a walk’ to every corner and space on the page.

MIDDLE

DISCUSSION
Is the face becoming or dissolving? What can you read from this image?

LOOKING
How has the artist created a sense of depth in this work?

ACTIVITY
Create a mechanical line portrait using a ruler to create repetitive fine lines.

SENIOR

DISCUSSION
What does Vernon Ah Kee’s description that the face is “becoming human” in the eyes of white settler society” mean? Who are the “white settler society”?

LOOKING
What effect do the radiating straight lines give? What do you think Ah Kee’s intended message could be?

ACTIVITY
Using this image as a starting point recreate it in other mediums.
Judy Watson

waanyi People
Born: Mundubbera, Queensland 1959

Judy Watson is an Indigenous artist whose matrilineal family is from country in North West Queensland. She represented Australia in the 1997 Venice Biennale and won the Meert & Chandon Fellowship in 1995. In 2006 she won the Clamontongu Contemporary Art Award held at the National Gallery of Victoria and the NATSIA works on paper award at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. Her work is included in major Australian and international collections. Her public art commissions include: Wurumka, a fifty metre etched zinc wall for the Melbourne Museum; Walama forecourt, a sculptural installation of woven steel screens and upturned bronze dilly bags at Sydney International Airport; Ngarngi Land/Law, a fifty metre etched zinc wall at the Victorian County Court, Melbourne. Her work, heart/land/river 2004, is in the foyer of the nearby Brisbane Magistrates Court. She is one of eight Australian Aboriginal artists commissioned to make work for the Musee du Quai Branly in Paris. Judy Watson’s work was included in the National Indigenous Art Triennial Q7 Culture Warriors exhibition at the National Gallery of Australia. In 2006 Culture Warriors: Australian Indigenous Art Triennial travelled to the American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center, Washington DC, USA. Judy Watson is represented by Milani Gallery, Brisbane.

Judy Watson

pisonia with acidification graph, 2009

pisonia with acidification graph is from a body of work made by Judy Watson following her 2009 residency at The University of Queensland’s Heron Island Research Station in February 2009. These works draw upon elements of the natural environment of the island, while also engaging with the scientific research being undertaken at the station. In doing so, works such as pisonia with acidification graph extend Watson’s ongoing engagement with the landscape, to reflect increasing ecological and environmental concerns.

The large central image is of a pisonia, the tropical plant found on Heron Island, and is based on numerous drawings completed by Watson during her residency. Underneath the image of the pisonia, Watson has included a graph measuring ocean acidification. One of the key areas of research for scientists on Heron Island is investigating the link between ocean acidification, coral bleaching and global warming.

In bringing together this imagery, Watson reflects on both the uniqueness and the fragility of the Great Barrier Reef. In the wake of the oil tanker spill on the Great Barrier Reef earlier this year, Watson’s work takes on greater currency, underlining for viewers the vulnerability of the reef to human activity.


“Recurring themes in Watson’s work are shells, middens, termite mounds, vessels, fossils, plants, islands and maps, and these are frequently rendered in a manner that evokes the corporeal: bones, hair, scarred skin and blood. Through this treatment of the body, Watson explores both the human presence within the land and the impact of the malevolent structures of the State upon Indigenous Australians”.

Alick Tipoti is a Torres Strait Islander who is guided by the Zugubal who have instructed me on the proper ways of our cultural traditions. ‘When I have connected with the Zugubal who have instructed me on the proper ways of our cultural traditions, I can sense the presence of the spirits who I verbally acknowledge and thank in language for their guidance and help in visualising the words they have given me. I vividly remember an unusual event late one evening where I was guided to resketch and change the interpretation of a block I was about to carve. This was just one of the many occasions when I have connected with the Zugubal who have instructed me on the proper ways of our cultural traditions.’

“In my life I have come to a level of understanding that I pray to the Zugubal of my culture”

The artist holds an Advanced Diploma in Arts, Thursday Island TAFE College and a Bachelor of Visual Arts, Australian National University, Canberra.

The artist’s linocuts derive from his wood-carving experiences on Badu Island. He is inspired by coastal life, family, traditional plants and medicines, the constellations and the myths and legends of the Torres Strait.

Apu Kaz

Apu Kaz is a term commonly used for a dugong mother and calf. The hunters of Zenadh Kes (Torres Strait) know many secrets about the dugong and have a very special relationship with these marine mammals. Very little of this information is shared with people outside of Zenadh Kes. The calf depicted in this print is at the stage in its development when it is about to feed on its own and fend for itself. The mother is showing the calf how to dive deeply in the strong current. The patterning represents the many different currents that flow through the islands of which the people have intimate knowledge and respect.

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“That’s the pattern, the triangle of how it was preserved and passed down. There’s oral tradition and the written records of a foreigner, and that all has come down to me and helped me in my task of documenting culture.” (quote from When Alick Tipoti dreams, a hidden world of images appears, Nicolas Rothwell, May 29 2008, The Australian)
**Samantha Hobson**

**Flat Calm** 2008  
acrylic on canvas  
170 x 107cm  
image as courtesy of the artist and Hogarth Galleries.

**Language:** Kuuku Y’au  
Lockhart River, Cape York  
Born: 1981  
Works: Cairns and Cape

Samantha Hobson was born in 1981 at Lockhart River, Cape York, the northernmost settlement of Eastern Australia. She belongs to the Kuuku ‘Yúu (Sand Beach people) who live between the sub-tropical rainforest of the Cape and the Coral Sea. She began painting with the Lockhart River Art Gang at the age of 17. Today, Samantha paints independently.

“I paint about my country…our land and our sea country… the patterns and colours and the stories. My grandmother tells me stories from the old days…I paint these stories. I paint things that happen in the community…sometimes what I see really upsets me. I paint. It makes me feel better inside.” (quote from Australian and Oceanic Art Gallery)

http://www.australianart.info/pages/artistpgs/lockhart/hobson_samantha/hob_sama.html

“Her early paintings of visceral abstraction represented the violence and dysfunction of remote communities, while her follow up series of fire paintings, although literal, also engaged as a metaphor regarding the cataclysmic effects of violence in her community seemingly located on the edge of paradise. More recently, the land and reef of spawning coral surrounding Lockhart River have been explored, together with traditional stories or Old Times; although all themes continue to be explored in her practice today.”

http://www.vivienandersongallery.com/artists/samantha_hobson/bio.html

Samantha’s work is close to abstract expressionism and challenges the accepted traditions of Aboriginal iconography (what Aboriginal art should look like). She is a complex artist as her paintings are often confronting either in subject matter or through the clashing boldness of her colours and marks. Her works capture, not only the features of her land but also the feel of sunlight or wind and the effects these have on the self and the environment.

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**EARLY DISCUSSION**

What do you think the title “Flat Calm” means? What does the repetitive white line make you think of?

**LOOKING**

Look at the colours Samantha has used. Why do you think she has chosen these colours?

**ACTIVITY**

Use finger paint to make patterns you might see on the water such as flat + calm; rough + choppy; smooth + rippy.

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**MIDDLE DISCUSSION**

What does the title of the work “Flat Calm” refer to? How has the image conveyed a feeling of calm?

**LOOKING**

Look at the colours Samantha has used. Why do you think she has chosen these colours?

**ACTIVITY**

Create a work that depicts the wind on the water.

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**SENIOR DISCUSSION**

Compare and contrast the intent and approach to landscapes between Samantha Hobson and Sally Gabori.

**LOOKING**

At the way this painting has been constructed. Has she reworked over a dry background or completed this work in one sitting?

**ACTIVITY**

Create large scale abstract expressionist landscapes that uses expressive arm gestures and working with your hands.
Artist: Ellarose Savage

Monkey ene Tortol – (Monkey and the turtle) 2009
woodfired ceramic
49cm x 35cm x 10cm

Traditional Language: Erub Mer
Island: Darnley Island, TSI
Born: 1969
Works: Erub Erwer Meta [Darnley Island Art Centre]

Ellarose is currently working as a member of Erub Erwer Meta (Darnley Island Art Centre) and would be considered as an emerging artist. Ella has always enjoyed art, making things and collecting from the traditional stone fish traps and reef that circle her island. She began her artistic journey in 2003 when, as the art teacher aide at the primary school, she had the opportunity to work with the ‘Green Turtle Dreaming’ national project.

As a female Torres Strait Islander Ellarose is interested in expressing her close relationship with the sea, currently exploring the links between a woman’s surroundings, everyday objects and childhood stories and memories. Clay is a medium Ellarose is comfortable with, modeling and building, bringing her ideas to life in three dimensions. This year she has been selected in the Telstra Awards with a 2 metre ceramic form of Zab (garfish).

Sea creatures have always been part of her life and heritage. She loves their graceful beauty and the environment from which they come. Since childhood, growing up on Darnley, the marine environment has been her life, culturally connecting her to ‘place’. With her father, a pearl diver and fisherman to guide her, Ellarose learnt how to hunt, dive, eat and respect all things from the land and sea.

Artist Statement

“Fired in Australia’s most northerly kiln, this woodfired ceramic piece has been wrapped in seaweed generating its unique markings.

This version of the foolish monkey and the turtle story is the one I remember from my childhood on Erub. It’s a popular story with a moral about sharing. It’s also a Torres Strait song that has many different versions including a hit song by Christine Anu. I am interested in how stories travel, how they are told and passed on. Researching this story I found that it is originally a folk tale of the Ilocano people from the Philippines. Even though this version is speaking about a freshwater turtle, growing up I always pictured a saltwater turtle as the character. The story is modeled on the back of the turtle, the foolish greedy monkey is in the banana tree while the turtle is waiting patiently for him to share. The monkey eats all the bananas and throws only the banana skins down to the turtle. Turtle gets very disappointed at the greedy monkey and says ‘you foolish monkey the river is my home’. However he is still doing the wrong thing being with the monkey. The boss comes and shoots the monkey and the turtle dead.”

Traditional Lyrics, Torres Strait Creole

**MONKEY ENE TORTOL**

Monkey ene tortol
Em two go
Em two pinde one banana
Monkey spek por tortol
U stap ya
I go nekeh banana por youme e
Tortol wile
Foolish monkey foolish monkey
River is my am e
Boss e cum ene shoote en two
Em two pall down belly up e
U sabe slop tin
U sabe damper
Mata bulli fly
Fly bulli e

**Traditional Language, Torres Strait Creole**

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Using a powerful mix of art and writing, the Children’s Picture Diary project aims to describe childhood – from the inside, through children’s pictures and stories.


During intensive workshops, The Children’s Picture Diaries project team collects stories about childhood, as told by children in drawing, painting, printmaking and writing. The picture diaries focus on three key concepts:

Creating the Picture Diaries

Children work with a team of artists, parents, teachers and volunteers on a three-day program. During this time, they paint portraits, draw and paint local landscapes, and make prints of their favourite activities. Story telling and writing is often a group activity with shared authorship outcomes. Children make their art and tell their stories in the company of adults who guide and support them.

Collecting the Picture Diaries

During the picture diary project, children are asked if they would like to participate in the workshops, and if we may collect their work. Family permission is also sought, plus other relevant organisational permissions. Thorough documentation is completed on each child’s artworks and stories prior to accessioning into the Dr Barbara Piscitelli AM Children’s Art Archive at State Library.

Digital images are available to view on the State Library of Queensland website: www.slq.qld.gov.au

Exhibiting the Picture Diaries

Original art from the project usually stays in the archive in Brisbane and visitors may look at it in the John Oxley Library at State Library of Queensland. From time to time, the children’s original work goes out for exhibition. The work has been exhibited at the Australian Embassy’s Gallery 1601 in Washington (2006) and at the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair (2009 & 2010).

Check out virtual books for some of the children’s picture diaries http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/find/virtualbooks/children

Thanks and Acknowledgements

Exhibiting artists
Thank you to the children, families, schools and Indigenous Knowledge Centres in Hope Vale, Poruma and Erub. Your work has inspired many people.

Presenting organization
The project has been fully supported by the State Library of Queensland.
What is REACH?
Regional Excellence in Arts and Culture Hubs
REACH is an Arts (all strands: Visual Arts, Drama, Dance, Music and Media) strategy being implemented by Education Queensland to connect and bring together people at primary and secondary schools all over FNQ (local, rural and remote) to:
• Improve Arts teacher practice by identifying existing strengths and skills and sharing these curriculum and classroom practices
• Identify talented Arts students and improve their learning and career pathways
• Develop and run school-based excellence courses for students using Artists in Residence
• Exhibit and celebrate successful outcomes of Arts students
• Build up a range of resources to support practical implementation of Arts in schools throughout FNQ.

The REACH Goal
Focus on improving consistency, balance and excellence in Arts Education delivery to Indigenous students, non-Indigenous students and teachers including all phases of learning in rural and remote contexts.