

**Ian Thorpe's Fountain for Youth**  
**Literacy Empowerment Project**  
**Snapshot of Progress**  
**March 31<sup>st</sup> 2010**



**Children at Bulla with Backpacks**



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Education, Employment**  
**and Workplace Relations**

**IAN THORPE'S**  
**Fountain for youth**



## **MILESTONES 2009-2010**

IAN THORPE'S FOUNTAIN FOR YOUTH (FFY) is contributing to early learning, literacy development, community storytelling, digital skilling and cultural education for more than 2,200 Aboriginal children attending 20 schools in 20 different remote communities.

Our partnership with AIME – AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS MENTORING EXPERIENCE – has extended our support to 800 urban Indigenous students mentored by undergraduates at 8 universities.

We have grown an exciting new partnership with Sydney's Peninsula Community of Schools to promote the Close the Gaps strategy.

The Literacy Backpack Project won a \$50,000 NAB SCHOOL'S FIRST IMPACT AWARD in 2009. This has strengthened staffing for the Katherine Group Schools project team and led to a series of workshops attended by other remote schools in the Northern Territory.

In the Northern Territory the Literacy Empowerment Project has continued to strengthen reading, writing and digital storytelling in Amanbidji, Barunga, Bulla, Bulman, Jilkminggan, Kalkaringi, Maningrida, Mataranka, Manyallaluk, Mynyerrri and Kewuyli Camp, Ngukurr, Pine Creek, Pigeon Hole, Timber Creek, Urapunga, Wugularr and Yarralin. In addition, our publication of the children's reader, "From Little Things, Big Things Grow", is helping establish an art and cultural education centre at Kalkaringi, as well as inspiring a new book series.

In Western Australia the Early Learning Project at La Grange School in the remote community of Bidyadanga has been an outstanding success, along with the establishment of a Library and Literacy Backpack Program.

With funds raised from public and corporate donations we have extended the Literacy Backpack Project and early learning to the Lockhart River Community School on Cape York, Queensland and St Michael's Catholic School on Palm Island.



**Marcus receives his new Backpack**



## **1. EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM**

At Bidyadanga (WA) a quality early learning program for 0-3 year olds has won high praise from the Principal of La Grange Remote Community School, Mark Williams, who says FFY's three year effort here is improving outcomes both social and academic. By funding teacher, Jenny O'Neill, Education Assistant, Gina Kitchener and introducing books, CDs, toys and equipment, we have demonstrated a model that improves learning by infants and at the same time increases parental involvement and understanding of education.

In the Northern Territory, an Indigenous Early Learning Project Officer employed by the Sunrise Health Service Aboriginal Corporation and funded by our project, supervises Aboriginal mothers as infant carers/teachers in Wugularr, Bulman/Weemol, Manyallaluk and Minyerri. These mothers are being given training for the Certificate 111 in Children's Services at Batchelor Institute for Indigenous Tertiary Studies.

At Lockhart River in far north Queensland, Aboriginal mothers supervise their infants in a playgroup using early learning books and other learning resources we have provided through independent fundraising. These mothers were given training in Townsville.

Extending the Literacy Backpack to infants does greatly boost early learning in homes. We continue to use public raised funds to boost early learning resources in these communities.



**Bulla preschoolers with Literacy Backpacks**

## 2. LITERACY BACKPACK PROGRAM



Literacy Backpacks with books, magazines and newspapers have been supplied to about 2200 children in the 20 remote Aboriginal communities in the Literacy Empowerment project. Because this highly successful approach is aimed at the whole family, parents and siblings in once bookless homes have benefited from access to interesting reading material. The results from the Katherine Group Schools region show a very positive impact on engagement and reading skills.

### Positive Results in 2009 Naplan Reading Test

		Reading			
		MAP		NAP	
		2006	2007	2008	2009
3	# Students	41	38	47	71
	% Participated	73%	62%	62%	<b>84%</b>
	# Achieved	15	16	13	28
	% Achieved	37%	42%	<b>27%</b>	<b>40%</b>
5	# Students	42	33	52	70
	% Participated	79%	69%	42%	<b>95%</b>
	# Achieved	9	14	8	12
	% Achieved	21%	42%	<b>15%</b>	<b>17%</b>
7	# Students	34	28	30	35
	% Participated	77%	78%	53%	<b>83%</b>
	# Achieved	4	5	7	7
	% Achieved	12%	18%	<b>23%</b>	<b>20%</b>

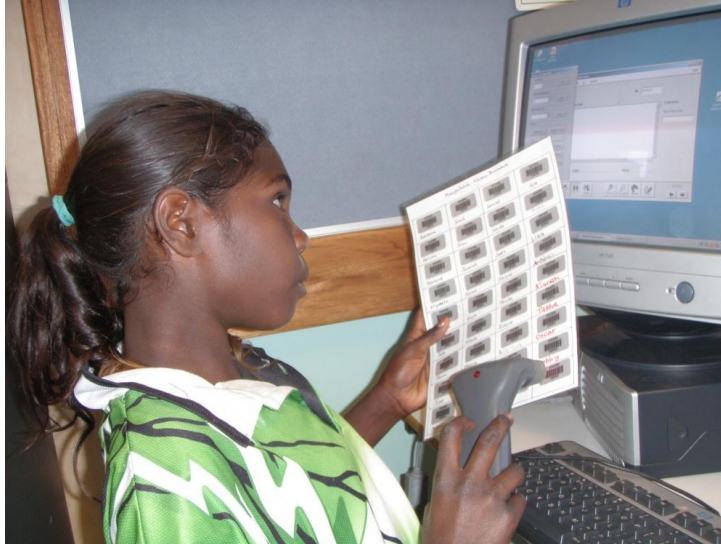
NT Year 3 increase - 4.2%. KGS increase - **13%**

Significant increase in participation rates as well as an increase in students reaching benchmark.

Cohort tracking indicates continued improvement. More students reaching benchmark.

## **“Building Education Revolution P21”**

The Literacy Backpack project is supporting the Australian Government’s “Building Education Revolution P21” initiative. In the Katherine region most of the schools are using the extra room to establish or expand their library operations. As part of the Literacy Backpack project senior students become Library Monitors trained in the use of the Agama Scanning program and responsible for encouraging students to look after the library books.

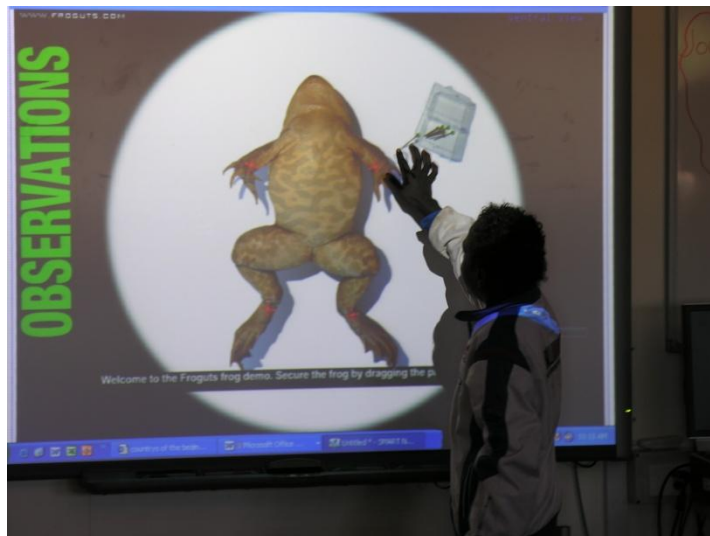


**Serita recording student’s names against books borrowed**

## **Smart Boards**

On the urging of NT principals and after our own research we have funded electronic smart boards in Wugularr, Jilkminggan, Pine Creek, Timber Creek, Urapunga, Yarralin, Bulla, Mataranka, Maningrida and Bidyadanga. Barunga will follow in late 2010. These have a strong impact by allowing kinetic learners to be physically involved. The outside world is brought into the remote community classroom with this technology.

Some funding for audio-visual and computer equipment has been drawn from our corporate supporters.



**Dissecting a frog during a science lesson**

### **3. COMMUNITY STORYTELLING PROGRAM**

Under the Literacy Empowerment project the leading children's authors, Liz Thompson and Alison Lester, have been funded to work with Aboriginal students in remote communities developing books and digital stories about their own life, culture and community.

In 2009 Year 9 & 10 students at La Grange Community School at Bidyadanga, Western Australia, were taught how to use cameras and audio recorders to upload their digital community stories. In this project Blogs are built for each school and then new online communities allow students at different schools to discuss their lives and work. Curricular work units have been developed and this creative learning enhances other aspects of student engagement with their syllabus.



**Student filming his family's story**

Liz Thompson continues to develop 'Big Book' stories and at Bidyadanga worked with younger children in Years 5 and 6. The children contributed art and digital pictures for the book after accompanying elders on excursions.

Following the huge impact in schools of the first six community stories in Series 1, Liz Thompson's Series 2 will be ready for publication in 2010.

The Community Stories project is also continuing in the Katherine Group Schools. Author Alison Lester and illustrator Ann James have been working with students to create and print stories on-site. Each of their books are immediately added to classroom reading resources and proudly displayed in the school.

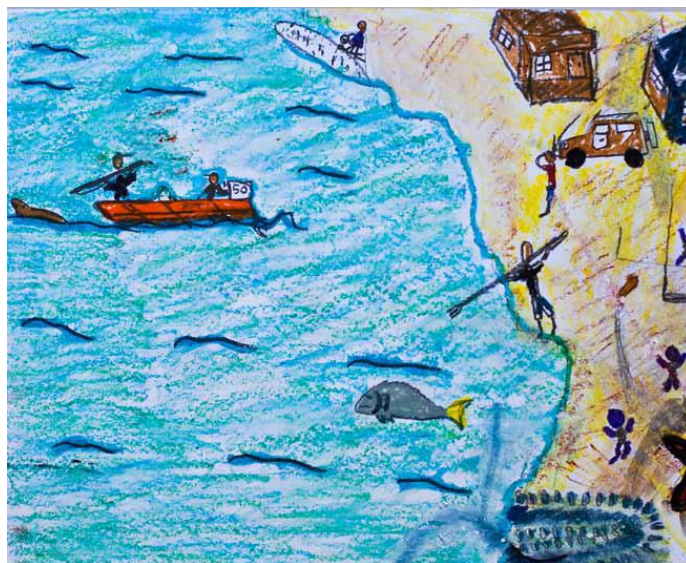


**Students working with Alison Lester writing and illustrating their own stories.**

Using publicly raised funds, Ian Thorpe's Fountain for Youth has published the children's story, **"FROM LITTLE THINGS BIG THINGS GROW"** in our growing effort to develop Aboriginal community stories.

The Gurindji students at Kalkaringi Community School painted the pictures for this story about Vincent Lingiari's land rights struggle. Using the lyrics of the popular song written by Paul Kelly and Kev Carmody this bestselling children's book has become a highly acclaimed classroom resource for all Australian students.

We are following up this success and hope to launch at this year's Melbourne Literary festival, a short series of similar collaborations, including "MY ISLAND HOME" in partnership with Aboriginal communities, writers and singers. In each community, Indigenous children help produce their local story. Funds for this project are drawn from public donations and proceeds will be directed towards additional literacy, art and cultural education in each remote community.



**Student artwork for the children's book My Island Home, from the 'From Little Things Big Things Grow Project'**

From Little Things Big Things Grow has raised more than \$90,000 with funds earmarked for literacy, art and cultural education in the Kalkaringi Community and School.

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## **4. CHILDREN'S CULTURAL SUPPORT PROGRAM**



The Walking with Spirits Festival in August 2009 was among the most successful in this decade long cultural education project in communities surrounding Beswick Falls, 120 kilometres south of Katherine NT.

The 2010 festival again will share the skills of Djilpin Arts Company and the Australian Shakespeare Company in developing stories, dance, music and film. Workshops are being held at the Cultural Centre in Wugularr/Beswick and a film unit is teaching young people how to produce video and audio stories about their traditional and contemporary life.

The Walking with Spirits Festival is alcohol free and its messages about harmony and cooperation have a very healthy impact on people from far flung communities.

Ian Thorpe's Fountain for Youth has contributed publicly raised funds to the national launch of the **Gondwana Indigenous Children's Choir**.

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## **5. WORKING WITH SCHOOLS TO CLOSE THE GAP**

In 2010 Ian Thorpe's Fountain for Youth and AIME (Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience) have forged a new and promising partnership with the award winning consortium of thirteen Sydney public schools known as the Peninsula Community of Schools.

These thirteen schools are linked to Macquarie University in a 'community of learning' to give students greater choice of quality subjects and access to high level teaching in science and mathematics.

FFY and AIME are connecting these schools to relevant Indigenous studies, raising community support for urban and remote Indigenous Literacy projects and showing children and their families how they can help Close the Gap.

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