

THE NGAANYATJARRA LANDS SCHOOL

A CASE STUDY



BY CARA SHIPP

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LEARNING AUSTRALIA



Acknowledgements

I would like to give my sincere thanks to the Yarnangu people of the Ngaanyatjarra lands and pay my respects to their ancestors for the continued care of their Country. I respect the senior women, community leaders and elders of today and the young people learning to be future leaders on their Country.

Thanks also to the Ngaanyatjarra Lands School staff and to John Hogan and Brooke Burns from Big Picture Learning for their ongoing work to build a thriving two-way learning school in the Lands.

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The Ngaanyatjarra People

The Aboriginal people (Yarnangu) who reside in the communities are part of a single social system that is referred to as the Western Desert Cultural Bloc. The Ngaanyatjarra people maintain a rich cultural heritage that is based on a close connection with the Land. They have a unique culture in society, economy, religion and outlook.

The Ngaanyatjarra Lands are situated in the east of Western Australia comprising some 250,000 sq. km. (about the size of Victoria) stretching from the tri-state border with South Australia and the Northern Territory. Approximately 2,000 Aboriginal people live in eleven communities that comprise the 'Ngaanyatjarra Lands'.

The population of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands includes the first wave of people who came out of the Western Desert in the 1930s and the last wave in the 1980s. The Ngaanyatjarra people have never left their country, nor has their land been annexed or occupied by outsiders.

The predominant language spoken is Ngaanyatjarra though in some places people speak Western Desert dialects of Pitjantjatjara and Pintupi. Other Aboriginal languages are also spoken as family connections reach far and wide.

The Aboriginal people in the Lands still hunt and gather bush tucker in traditional ways. Traditional men's and women's business remains very strong. The senior people are keen to teach the young people about the traditional ways of hunting, gathering and cooking bush tucker and are concerned that their young people do not lose their traditional language and culture.

The cover image depicts the Seven Sisters Dreaming story.



The Ngaanyatjarra Lands School (NLS) comprises eight school campuses across the Western Desert of Western Australia, near NT/SA borders. It serves communities within the Ngaanyatjarra, Pitantjatjara, Pintupi and other cultural groups. These communities have maintained unbroken connection with their country, languages and cultures in a way that is distinctly different to those in regional and urban contexts.



‘Preparing students for a good life on the Lands’

The Ngannyatjarra Lands School’s purpose—to prepare students for a good life on the Lands—is documented and talked about regularly. Students are learning two-ways: English/Whitefella way alongside their own languages and cultural learning.

Through the Big Picture Learning design, the elements of leaving to learn and working with mentors are realised through local On-Country learning, elders-in-residence, visiting Western education programs and mentors, online mentoring, and camps to urban centres such as Perth. This helps their young people get ideas about what skills, jobs and areas of interest the world holds.

The hope is for students to be lifelong learners, to have access to employment opportunities, ultimately bringing their knowledge and skills to bear on a life in their community, working with and for their people, on their land. This values the strength in their communities and challenges deficit views about students needing to leave in order to thrive. For too long, notions of ‘success’ in remote and regional communities have been about students leaving to go to ‘real school’ out in urban centres, then progressing into further education, and then a career in the city or abroad. At the Lands, Big Picture Learning Australia is working with staff, students and families to ensure students stay

connected and serve their own communities: that students learn to return.

I was privileged to join NLS’ Big Picture Learning school coaches, Brooke Burns and John Hogan, on a one-week Big Picture Camp. This annual camp is held at one of the eight campuses, bringing together students and staff to allow them to experience the Big Picture Learning design in action, and to support staff to collaborate together and access advisor training to take back to their campuses. Students engage in a mix of advisory activities such as: Who am I, interest brainstorming, planning, journaling and portfolio-building, as well as leaving to learn activities with local community elders, mentors, businesses and service providers brought onsite from Perth.

This case study is simply a collection of my reflections from the week. I did not attend the camp with the specific intention to research or record anything, although in Big Picture Learning we continually ‘observe’, ‘notice’ and ‘reflect’; it’s embedded in the design. But I felt the learning and reflections I had during my Lands visit, about Indigenous education, and the role Big Picture Learning can play in it, were useful to share. These reflections are based not only on one short week in a community, but on my lifetime of lived experience as an Aboriginal woman and my own action research as an Aboriginal educator looking for ways to improve outcomes for my mob.



‘The turtle’, a significant site on my Country near Dubbo, NSW.

Big Picture Learning was first invited in by the Ngaanyatjarra Lands communities to work with their secondary school students in 2014, and implementation began in 2016. Ten years on, what are we learning in our work together? And is this learning relevant for other Indigenous communities across Australia?

A personal perspective: circles and lines

My aunty says we think in circles. We like to sit in circles and yarn in circles too. In this introduction, I am going to introduce myself and my story in my way.

Being a Wiradjuri/Welsh woman means many complex but related things. My Aboriginal family is from the Western NSW region including the towns of Dubbo, Trangie, Peak Hill, Parkes, Forbes and Narromine. We are people of the red earth, and we describe ourselves to other Aboriginal people through our natural connections.

In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, the earth is our mother and through her we are related to the waters, skies, animals, plants and landscapes of our particular Country. Traditionally one way this was explained was through our totems. My people are goanna people, Gugaa, of the Wiradjuri nation. My family are freshwater turtle mob, Warrumba; the people of three rivers, Wambool (Macquarie), Kalari (Lachlan) and Murrumbidgee. We have a significant site, a hill we call the turtle because that’s how it looks from a bird’s eye view, and this place reminds our family of our obligation to care for turtles and the surrounding ecosystem.

For Indigenous Australians, Country really is our lifeblood, our history, our future, our kin. And wherever you are from, your ancestors may also have lived in this way. My Welsh family remembers strong connections to Earth and living things. In our Celtic culture we pass down language and knowledge through song; in Australian Indigenous cultures, songlines cross our continent holding the stories of our land.

The Welsh saying “dod yn ôl at fy nghoed” (pronounced “dohd un ohl at uhv uh n-goyd”) translates to “to return to my trees”. It’s a figurative saying that refers to returning to a state of balance and calm, the kind of feeling you get when among the trees and out in nature. It’s a reminder that connection to nature is important for our wellbeing.

I believe it is not only connection to nature that creates wellness, but connection to each other in nature, sharing and repeating stories that reawaken, strengthen and inspire us; stories that remind us who we are and what our business is in this world.

The 10-hour drive from Alice Springs to the first community in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands, Warakurna, was very much, for me, a returning to my trees. The further into red earth and scrub we got, the calmer I felt. It wasn’t my Country, but the spiritual connection through songlines was palpable. One of those songlines is the Seven Sisters Dreaming, one that Nanna Daisy from Warakurna and the other Yarnangu Senior Women had personal connections to, and one which framed our On-Country learning while we visited their land.



On-Country learning

I love visiting other Indigenous communities and seeing the similarities and differences in our experiences. There was a lot of similar knowledge about animals and trees that exist in both our Countries, but there were also features of the desert that are different to the Western Plains of NSW.

We all had shared understanding about colonial history, including the Aborigines Protection Act, Stolen Generations and Missions and Reserves. We shared knowledge of Aboriginal popular culture and politics. But the Lands communities live more closely in connection with their Dreaming every day, speak their traditional language as a first language, and have ownership of their land in a way that we do not in urban contexts (part of their land is leased to them as Aboriginal reserve and parts are managed under a Native Title determination, under the Aboriginal Lands Trust administered by Ngaanyatjarra Council).

What was interesting was that when I followed protocol and sat in-circle with students and community members to explain who I am and what my business is—my Wiradjuri Country, totems, family relationships and my personal purpose to improve access to education and future pathways for Indigenous students— I was accepted as an Aboriginal person; not Yarnangu but not a whitefella. And so I felt powerfully the connection we have, the connection that BPLA Indigenous students all over the nation will have, regardless of their appearance or where they live or how they practise culture and language.

Our discussions in the classroom, or even in the playground, paled in comparison to being 'out' on Country.



A key dreaming story of the Wanarn school campus and community is **the cockatoo and the crow**. The story adorns the welcome sign at the front of the campus and is woven into a large painting connecting the key dreaming stories of each of the Ngaanyatjarra Lands school campuses. On the first afternoon, students tried their best to listen to Nanna Daisy explaining the painting. They were respectful, but distracted by the excitement of arriving, the anxiousness of being away from home, and wondering what the social dynamics of the week would hold. The adults shepherded the kids, playing the usual role of teacher-student. It was still just kinda school.

It was not until we were out on Country, at a key site where the cockatoo and the crow story played out, that we all felt it and connected. Out there, there were no walls, bells and aluminium tables. Out there, Nanna Daisy and the Yarnangu senior women channelled their ancestors and thousands of years of knowledge. We were no longer 'doing school'. We could see, feel and hear the Dreaming. There was space for every person to be themselves. The young people mirrored the joy and calm reverence of their elders. The teachers shook off their roles and embraced being learners. We could all relax, as Country told us what to do.



Learning through internships: On- Country

There is nothing more joyous than seeing young Indigenous kids learning on Country with Indigenous knowledge-holders. I have witnessed this on my own Country in Dubbo, NSW, and in my teaching roles with Koori kids in Canberra, ACT. The meaning, purpose, sense of belonging and pride that young people get from these experiences is key to nourishing their confidence and strength as learners in all aspects of their lives. The learning opportunities out bush are endless, and they can bring their learning back into the classroom in many ways.

In one Canberra school, I ran a unit of work based around visiting 6 local sites of cultural significance. Each time we went out with the Indigenous Rangers, the students came back and chose to research and write about everything from bush foods and cooking, to traditional medicine, to geology and rock formation and volcanos, to jobs as rangers and tourism operators. The same happened on our on-Country learning day at the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. Students spoke more, wrote more, painted, responded to their learning. Some talked about becoming rangers, and others shared their experiences as interns with the local ranger groups.

As BPL founder Elliot Washor often states, Western ways of learning traditionally emphasise ‘knowing’ as a pre-requisite for ‘doing’ when in fact it is often the doing that sparks the knowing. Doing first is also about making, creating, fixing, playing, in and out of school. On Country, learning often happens through doing—such as digging for witchetty grubs—while also gaining knowledge of Dreaming stories, life cycles, and the relationships between plants, animals, and

seasonal cycles.

The excitement at the NLS Big Picture Camp on the morning we were going out on Country was palpable – in both the staff and students. The staff walked with a relaxed air and were more present with their young people. Taking learning out of school is more fun and meaningful for everyone. At NLS, Nanna Daisy, Dr Lizzie Ellis, and former Executive Principal Sandy Robertson are key to these experiences and their roles reflect the importance the school places on this kind of learning.

‘There’s a certain irony in trying to capture the power of learning out bush through writing – because what happens there often transcends language...learning on Country is about so much more than content. It holds deeper meaning because it’s personal. There is a profound connection for these students – to the land, to culture, to nature. Watching them learn alongside Elders is powerful. They absorb knowledge by observing, listening, and participating – side by side with their community.

What they learn matters deeply to them, and it shows...they’re being spoken to in their own language—not English—and learning about a place that is their home. They carry a sense of pride that can’t be quantified, but you feel it. In these moments, teachers become students. The field is levelled, you witness transformation. Students light up with excitement and curiosity. Those who often struggle in the classroom become leaders and reveal their intelligence and strength. And at its core, it’s also just good, old-fashioned fun. There may be a schedule...but it flows, it breathes, it adapts.’
(Scott Carson, Big Picture Learning Advisory Teacher, Wingellina Campus, 2025)



Daisy Tjuparntarri Ward at the Warakurna campus.

A field of Daisies

Nanna Daisy is the heart of the NLS community and has been a senior woman and passionate advocate for her people across the Lands, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory for decades. She's worked at the NPY Women's Centre in Alice Springs and opened her home to women fleeing domestic violence. She's been awarded the Director General's Women of Achievement Award for 2020 for her work as a passionate advocate for quality cross-cultural remote Aboriginal education, freedom from domestic violence and the maintenance of traditional culture for Ngaanyatjarra people, especially the children.

Daisy Tjuparntarri Ward is the Ngaanyatjarra Lands School's Senior Cultural and Community Liaison Officer, and **Dr Lizzie Marrkilyi Ellis** is the Cultural Curriculum Coordinator. Dr Ellis is an educator, linguist and interpreter who has worked as a research fellow at the Australian National University and has been awarded an honorary doctorate for her internationally recognised work. Both women have also served as members of the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee (AJAC) for the WA Department of Justice.

Nanna Daisy has also advised CSIRO and collaborated on a STEM project using on-Country learning, and I am sure I have not even scratched the surface of the reach and influence this woman has had in her lifetime. But the achievement Miss Daisy chose to tell me about first, as I gave her my arm to walk across to the campfire, was that she was painted for the Archibald Prize in 2019 by David Darcy and it won the People's Choice Awards.

View the portrait here:

<https://bit.ly/300QIJT>

In a very Big Picture Learning kind of story, the Archibald prize story began with a random conversation in a shop, and a relationship formed. David Darcy met the inimitable Nanna Daisy when she entered his store looking for art supplies. They got to know each other over several weeks and once he realised what an extraordinary woman she was, he had the idea to paint her for the prize. Nanna Daisy, of course, saw this as another win for her people, putting them on the map and in people's consciousness even over in the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

The portrait says everything you need to know about Nanna Daisy. She is staunch, powerful, kind, generous, infinitely knowledgeable, cheeky, funny, and doggedly committed to young people accessing two-way learning in culture and in the Western school system so that they can live a good life on the Lands.

As she gets older, Daisy's work becomes more urgent: she wants to ensure that many NLS students gain the experience and qualifications to work as leaders in the Lands, in the school, throughout the community, and representing the community at state and federal levels. I'm told that one of the NLS Executive Principals once said that "we need a field of Daisies", and when you meet her, you instantly understand what he meant. Her energy and drive is astonishing - imagine where the Lands community and its children, would be with more Daisies to lead the way.



Allies are just as important in the leadership of the school, and **Sandy Robertson**, former NLS teacher, Campus Principal and Executive Principal, is the epitome of allyship. Over decades, Sandy has become like a sister to Daisy. She's learned language, sat down with all the Senior women, hosted them at her Perth home, and built the school programs with them. I was told more than once that "nothing happens at the Lands schools without Daisy's say so", and I wondered more than once if Sandy had something to do with embedding Daisy and Senior Yarnangu women in leadership roles at the school.

Sandy models exactly how whitefellas need to be when engaging with Indigenous communities, whether urban, regional or remote. She listens, learns, truly collaborates, and always puts the community leaders first. She is committed, she stayed long enough to form relationships and become part of the community, she knows how to wait and work on Aboriginal community timeframes, and she has a cracking sense of humour. We heard her story during the camp week, as she was one of the guest speakers sharing their autobiographies with the students. She told us she turned up at Warburton Campus as a graduate teacher straight out of university and just "kept laughing". She immediately saw the fun and the possibilities in working with the Ngaanyatjarra communities and didn't take herself too seriously. It probably helped that she was a little older and had already travelled and lived in New York: a sense of adventure and being able to relinquish control is pretty important out in the Lands.

Schools have great potential to be community hubs and sites of support, connection and empowerment for all community members. More

schools need to prioritise the work of connecting with their local community, installing cultural leaders within the fabric of the school, co-leading and co-creating power and opportunity through relationships. From a Big Picture Learning perspective, imagine the possibilities for mentorship if a school was co-constructed and led by a variety of community members who could teach students in and out of school.



Nanna Karen teaches us her Dreaming, a part of the Seven Sisters Dreaming songline that stretches across the continent. This is at the site of 'old Wanarn'.

Leaving to learn, learning to return: community-building

As an Aboriginal woman working in education, I feel strongly about the role of schools in righting past wrongs. This includes telling the truth about our history and supporting all students of all backgrounds to actually interact with First Nations people and cultures in authentic ways so we can all move forward positively together. But most important to me is improving the relationship between schools and First Nations young people, so that they can access quality, relevant educational opportunities that lead to positive future pathways.

And schools cannot improve their relationships with First Nations students without improving their relationship with the students' whole community. When I listened to keynote speaker Pam Roy talk about 'meaning and mattering' at the BPLA 2025 International Conference, I reflected that 'meaning' within First Nations communities is linked to survival:

- keeping our families together
- keeping our cultures and languages alive
- keeping our communities healthy and (re) learning our roles as traditional custodians looking after Country and people
- finding ways to walk two worlds, two cultures, two systems and thrive in both
- fighting for our human rights and fighting to protect rights that are continually threatened

Survival. Spiritually, culturally, practically. Lots of our young people, families and communities are moving from surviving to thriving. I want to see more. We want to see more: the same message came through from the International First Nations panel I sat with at the conference. We talked about how a First Nations world view understands that each student walking through the school gates walks in with their community, their elders and their ancestors behind them, standing steeped in the history of their place, with a clear cultural purpose. We have meaningful work to do and we are doing it everyday in our homes and communities separate to, and regardless of, what traditional school curriculum asks of young people. Big Picture Learning schools can value



and make room for young peoples' community and cultural obligations, honour the strengths that they bring to their education, and support young people to live a life of their own design in their own community context.

As well as the on-Country experience, the leaving to learn excursions during the NLS Big Picture Camp included visits to NG Media, the local Aged Care home, the new outback farm, and the local community shop. The outback farm is a new initiative of the Albanese Government's Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program (RJEP). This is a new version of the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) that has long been plagued by issues of governance and measures of poor performance by Canberra's policy yardsticks. Nanna Daisy spoke passionately to the students about the CDEP when we visited old Wanarn. The former town site brought memories to her of the proud community initiatives and work that the local people engaged in. She explained that under CDEP, government funding was provided to community organisations to create their own projects, so they have ownership and control over what is done, they can ensure their priorities and needs are met, and they employed their own community members to do the work. An example she gave was building a road into the community that took into account sacred sites and diverted away from areas that needed to be protected.

What Daisy is identifying, and what we saw in the outback farm project, is the need to upskill, educate, train and fund Lands people to stay and contribute to the economic growth of their community. To keep the skills and knowledge in the community so they can live in self-determined and culturally aligned ways, benefiting from both Western and Yarnangu knowledge systems.



The power of the BPL design: what Indigenous education can be like

So, what are we learning in our work together with the Lands school? And is this learning relevant for other Indigenous communities across Australia?

Two-way learning is key

Valuing learning Yarnangu way and Western way values Indigenous knowledges and promotes positive cultural identity. Many Indigenous communities ask for ‘two-way learning’ to happen, and there is a whole body of research and curriculum documents around the concept.

In a Big Picture school context, learning from the community is a natural way of life for students and teachers. Going out on Country is a form of learning through interest and learning through internship. Service learning and social action in the community is part of what we do, too. On-Country learning and mentorships with Elders, rangers and other community leaders can be jump-off points for in-school reflection, storytelling, projects, and evidence of what the students know and can do against the 6 Big Picture Learning Goals.

The challenge for all schools, including NLS, is they must continually make this link to ensure learning ‘out there’ is not seen as separate or inferior to learning ‘in here’ (classroom). Advisory teachers can work with family and community to ensure that students document their out of school learning in their portfolios in ways that follow local protocols around the knowledge being shared. The presence of community members in the classroom will help with this. Capturing the whole picture of the student and how they learn ‘both ways’ is intentional work that school leaders can support advisory teachers to focus on.

Community partnerships are a part of the resourcing, the learning support, the authentic assessment

BPLA has no control over what resourcing schools get; however, the BPL model of utilising outlearning and experts in community, industry and online helps schools to create partnerships with organisations who can support access to industry-level equipment and resources.

For example, Prepare, Produce, Provide is a WA community organisation based in Perth. The PPP team travels to remote communities to run industry-level culinary workshops and provides support into VET and Employment Pathways. They also receive students able to travel to Perth for further industry-level training at events and camps throughout the year. The PPP team ran activities for the NLS students throughout the Big Picture Learning Camp Week, catering to the camp participants, teachers and the local aged care home.

Another example shared by our BPL Coach for Roebourne District High School, Brooke Burns, is that while the community arts organisation Big hART was in town, they were engaged to run workshops with senior students around scripting, filming and producing their Online Portfolio and Video Profile.

While some services cost money to be part of, many of these community organisations receive funding to run programs in low SES schools for free. Schools can benefit greatly from working with community organisations who have already established partnerships with local communities and national industry networks.

The magic of exhibitions

The energy around exhibitions in Big Picture Learning schools is always exciting and



transformative. Across all our school settings, young people decide how and what they wish to share as evidence of their learning each term. They set the agenda, choose who to invite, decide where it will be, and run the event. This is authentic learning and assessment, continually building students' confidence across a range of modalities and technologies.

After one short week of Big Picture Camp, our exhibition was in the form of a gallery walk. Each campus had a pinboard and desks to set up a display of their week's learning. They annotated photographs, wrote journal reflections, and displayed artefacts such as clothing items sewn in the Deadly Denim textiles activity.

The students knew that Nanna Daisy and other senior Yarnangu women, community members and Aboriginal teaching assistants were attending, and they were proud and excited to showcase their learning. The buzz at set-up time was infectious.

We began with a reflection activity in-circle with Nanna Daisy. She did not hold back in asking questions and expecting every student to find their voice, speak up, and articulate what they loved and didn't love about the week. Then students stood with their campus displays and answered questions about their work as the adults toured around the gallery.

We learned something new about each student and they, of course, rose to the occasion. This made me reflect on the importance of pushing through shyness and anxiety with students, giving them multiple opportunities to speak and share their work so that they build confidence through repeated practice. Also, Nanna Daisy's presence was integral to the success of the event, reminding us to ensure key mentors are at exhibitions and have a real role in the student's learning and assessment in and out of school.

Community-based teachers

The NLS setting is challenging, as many remote and regional settings are, due to the transience of teaching staff. NLS's commitment to creating positions within the school for community members is a key strategy to address this. As well as embedding Lizzie and Daisy as school leaders, NLS employs a number of parents and community members as teaching assistants, youth workers and liaison officers. The BPL design requires different skills of an advisory teacher than a traditional subject teacher, and many of the advisory teachers' roles can be fulfilled well (or better) by local community employed in school roles, so long as training, support, duty of care/ supervision and remuneration is worked out. There are schemes to support these employees to gain their formal teaching qualification through their role if they desire, and in BPL of course there is the hope that some students may wish to return to the school in staff roles in future, making this part of their Big Picture learning while at school. The BPL design can be supported long-term in a remote school if we reimagine the roles and responsibilities of school staff, and such reimagining may go equally well to support the design in urban and regional settings as well.

Opportunities to address local social and community issues and find meaningful future pathways in their home community

"They don't want to go off Country, they've had a link to it for thousands and thousands of years, it's deeply connected to their identity" - Liesel O'Keeffe, former Deputy Principal

(<https://www.bigpicture.org.au/file/ngaanyatjarra-lands-what-big-picture-design>)

Sometimes it feels that Indigenous people and students carry more of a 'duty' to give back to their community and Country than anyone else.



While most Indigenous people feel this sense of duty as part of cultural protocols, BPL places an emphasis on social action by all students and teachers in the school. Community projects are often shared and gain momentum as advisory projects.

When visiting the Wanarn Outback Farm, two of the students from another campus spoke about their passion for plants and their internship with the local rangers. This sparked a discussion with their teacher about establishing a community garden at their campus. The teacher realised her own passion for growing produce had been latent and saw this as an opportunity to work with the students and their families on a project that would provide healthy and affordable food for the local community.

The Ngaanyatjarra Lands School states its core purpose is to prepare their young people to live a good life on the Lands. This is their Country and they do not want to leave it. However, the families and community leaders support two-way learning so that Western knowledges and education can equip their young people and future leaders to interact with the broader Australian society. It is always understood that the broader purpose of this education is for young people to bring back their learning to strengthen their communities, as reflected in the Outback Farm initiative and previous CDEP projects.

The Ngaanyatjarra people's aspirations for their children are reflected broadly in the research by Macdonald et al (2025) and the Culturally Responsive Pedagogy project (University of SA, 2025). BPL's focus on leaving to learn, collaboration with community, development of local networks, and social action complement these goals and offer new ways for schools and Indigenous communities to achieve them.



One student at a time, one school at a time, one community at a time

Comparing my work with urban Indigenous students (from diverse community contexts in Big Picture schools in the ACT and QLD) with my observations on the Ngaanyatjarra Lands allows me to see in practice what the BPL design might offer to Indigenous education. BPL is currently being adapted locally with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities in places such as Roebourne, WA; Taminmin, NT; Brisbane, QLD; and Albury, NSW.



Every community is different and local First Nations young people, families and leaders are the first people to consult when considering how the design can improve the lives of not only students, but the whole community.

In this case study, I set out to explore whether what we've learned from BPL in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands School may be relevant for other Indigenous communities across Australia. Here are some reflection questions to help you think about your local context.

- How are you connecting to the local place and people?
- How can you build an advisory connection with the local place and people?
- Are there On-Country learning experiences to be had in your local region? (as a starting point, look for your local Land council, or Indigenous land and sea ranger groups)
- Is there a place for your First Nations students, staff, families and community members to meet, do cultural business, have a cuppa and a yarn within your school? Has it/can it be designed by the First Nations students and community?
- How are you finding ways to learn from local community members in school?
- Is there opportunity for language learning or other two-way learning to be designed and delivered by local community members in your school?
- Are your community partnerships with external organisations supporting resource needs or learning support needs? Can they be strengthened to do this? Are there other organisations around who can also do this?
- Are your mentors and key community members getting around the student work, attending exhibitions, being part of the learning and assessment cycle?
- How are you nourishing a culture of social and community engagement/activism?
- How can you reimagine your staffing allocations to employ community members who have a key role in teaching and learning?
- Is the BPL design being used to its potential to help students progress toward future work in their community, if that is what they want?
- Are there ways to support local community members to gain qualifications and upskill through their work with the school?

For twenty years, Big Picture Learning Australia has offered a new design for learning that places the learner at the centre, partners with families and strengthens communities. A through-line of our work has been the social justice goal of removing culturally-biased assessment and addressing the racial inequity embedded in education systems by offering a personalised, strengths-based approach and growing access to post-school pathways.

What is your next step in contributing to social justice and equity for all in your context?



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