Case Study
Ceremonial Ripples 2017

What: The Toowoomba region was a meeting and gathering place for the traditional owners to facilitate social and cultural exchange between tribes, practice ceremony and work out differences. The Empire Theatre is a modern day equivalent as a central meeting and gathering place for social and cultural exchange for the community.

As part of reconciliation week in 2017, students in Grades 4 were invited to participate in a day of workshops at the Empire Theatre drawing on tradition, history and story explored through language, storytelling and dance. Students learnt about the past to understand the now and connect with the future.

Indigenous artists were sourced to facilitate each of the workshops including Oakey based dance troupe Kooma-Didgeri Aboriginal Art & Dance, Cultural Education specialist Winangali Infusion, locally based visual artist Kim Walmsley and Performing Artist Paula Nazarski, a graduate of the Aboriginal Centre for Performing Arts in Brisbane. Primary schools Rockville State School, Harlaxton State School, Toowoomba North State School and Harristown State School were invited to participate in the event, with a total of 95 students were in attendance on the day of both indigenous and non-indigenous descent. The students participated in four different workshops across the day in traditional dance, visual art practice, Gamilaraay language and storytelling.

Businesses and service providers including USQ, Carbal Medical Centre, Toowoomba Regional Council and SWIN donated a collection of items to hand out to students in a show bag for the day, with the Qld Police Service, SES and Carbal Medical Centre in attendance during the lunch break with merchandise and information available to the students in attendance.

The knowledge and experiences of the children that attended will be taken back to their own schools, communities and families, and will filter through into their daily lives.

Enjoying a final dance at the end of the day with Kooma-Didgeri

When: 30 May 2017

Where: Empire Theatres Precinct, Armitage Centre and Empire Church Theatre.

Partners, Contributors and Sponsors:

Queensland Police Service
Winangali Infusion
Kooma-Didgeri Aboriginal Art & Dance
Paula Nazarski, Performing Artist
Kim Walmsley, Visual Artist
Centenary Heights State High School
Friends of the Empire Theatre

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Outcomes: This was the third event of its type and it is hoped to be an annual event. 95 students, nine teachers, nine artists, six service providers and local, state and federal government departments were involved in the event on the 30th May held at one of Toowoomba’s newest community cultural spaces, the Armitage Centre.

Each student learnt a traditional dance including the story and history behind its origin, explored traditional storytelling techniques and the rituals of performing these in a group setting, hand crafted a dragonfly and explored its symbolic meaning within the indigenous community and learnt words from the Gamilaraay language of the Northern NSW region.

Each workshop focused on the significance and origin of traditional culture and how it translates into modern life. Students willingly engaged on all levels, soaking up the information and experiences and taking away a new appreciation for traditional culture.

Feedback from all participants and contributors has been very positive, with many expressing interest in participating in 2018.

The 2016 and 2017 events were made possible by funding through Prime Minister and Cabinet Indigenous Advancement Strategy funding.

Support this year allowed us to provide bus transportation to the schools free of charge which was identified as a potential barrier early in the consultation and planning.

This project directly correlates with six objectives in the Empire Theatres Projects Company Business Plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy One</th>
<th>Be accessible and engaging.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Create and facilitate programs and projects that are mindful of the diversity and richness of all regional Australians inclusive of all ethnic and cultural origins and demographic and socio-economic circumstances.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>To address the issues of remoteness and accessibility to the arts in regional Australia through the provision of arts services locally including training and education resources delivery.</td>
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<th>Strategy Two</th>
<th>Link arts and community</th>
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<td>2.1</td>
<td>To foster and maintain relationships with a broad range of cultural, community and government groups and individuals in order to be in tune with current priorities and desires.</td>
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<th>Strategy Three</th>
<th>Increase and deepen cultural consciousness and capacity in the region.</th>
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<td>3.1</td>
<td>Develop audiences and increase engagement in creative activity throughout our community.</td>
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<td>3.3</td>
<td>To develop and nurture a community of artists and arts workers in and around the Toowoomba region.</td>
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<th>Strategy Four</th>
<th>Be a stable and reliable resource for the community.</th>
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<td>4.1</td>
<td>To develop thriving arts business practice through strong partnerships, commercial income streams and alternative funding programs.</td>
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Learnings and reflections: This is the third event of this kind, and overall the day ran very smoothly. A few small logistic and timing adjustments were made on the day and will occur in subsequent events to optimise the flow of the day. The assistance of four students from Centenary Heights State High School was greatly appreciated, with one student being assigned to each group for the duration of the day.

This project also correlates with Community outcomes 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 in the TRC 2014-2019 Corporate Plan.