

POETRY IN FIRST LANGUAGES EVALUATION

Prepared for Red Room Poetry by
BYP Group

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Acknowledgement of Country: BYP Group acknowledges Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and pays respect to Elders past and present. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's Traditional Owners, Custodians and First Nations.

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Disclaimer: Some of the information contained in this report is derived from surveys and interviews. The authors advise that while every effort has been taken to ensure the accuracy of information on the following pages, the authors do not accept responsibility for the information contained or views expressed in this report.

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2. Executive Summary

This report is an evaluation of the first year of Red Room Poetry's *Poetry in First Languages* (PIFL) program, based on a combination of surveys, reflection tools and interviews conducted by BYP Group and Red Room Poetry.

2.1 Key Deliverables

In 2018, PIFL:

- **Engaged** more than 350 First Nations students, 500 community members and more than 1,500 non-First Nations young people
- **Published** more than 300 poems in 11 First Nation languages
- **Reached** audiences of 300,000+ through live performances, bus poetry and artistic installations
- **Employed** 24 First Nations poets, Elders and Language Custodians
- **Provided** NESA accredited professional development for 120 + participants
- **Connected** First Nations poets with an estimated 40 schools and communities across NSW

2.2 Key Findings

The need

PIFL addresses a clear gap in the educational and cultural offer for First Nations students in NSW. The program was a one-of-kind opportunity for almost all of the First Nations participants. 95% of the schools and communities involved in PIFL had no other access to First Nations language programs.

The experience

The overwhelming majority of participants reported a positive experience of the program (94%). Participants learned new First Nations language skills, cultural knowledge, and how to express themselves through poetry. Because the program was fun and engaging, students transitioned from 'unsure' or 'nervous' at the start of the workshop to happy, 'loud and proud' by the end.

The impact

The program instilled confidence in First Nations children about their language, identity and culture. Many participants shifted from feeling disinterested and lacking confidence at the start of the day, to feeling engaged, confident and more knowledgeable about themselves and culture by the end of the workshop. Some children discovered family relationships as a result of the workshop, and are continuing to deepen these connections.

For the Elders, poets and Custodians involved in the program, PIFL was deeply affirming of culture and language, and offered hope that these would be passed on to the next generation. Aunty Trish Levett described the importance of keeping culture alive through programs like PIFL.

To see the kids' faces when they can't write poetry let alone write poetry in language, then coming out with a piece of poetry that has language in it and has meaning behind it for them individually; that's the gratitude I get from this project. – Aunty Trish Levett, Gundungurra Custodian

The process

Participants reported a positive experience of the process, and many hoped to do the program again. When asked what they liked about the program, 54% reported that they liked the sense of connecting with Country, Elders and poets. Participants and facilitators suggested more outdoor and physical activities, and generally more time to work with First Nations young people, either over a series of consecutive days or over a longer-term course of activity.

Our recommendations

BYP Group recommends that PIFL be continued and if possible, deepened to allow longer or repeat engagement with the program by students, and expanded to reach more communities. We recommend that Red Room Poetry:

- Maintain the model of working closely with Elders, Language Custodians and poets and using multiple poetic artforms ranging across dance, poetry and all the creative arts
- Continue to publish and perform the poetic works of poets and students, as this amplifies the sense of pride and self-value experienced by participants
- Continue hold programs offsite in locations which allow for outdoor activities and connection with nature and Country

There is potential to develop a model that also engages non-First Nation students. However, as the need for creative language programs for First Nations young people is still largely unmet, we recommend that Red Room Poetry continue to focus on this space.

3. Introduction

This report is an evaluation of the first year of Red Room Poetry's *Poetry in First Languages* (PIFL) program.

Red Room Poetry (RR) is a non-profit Australian organisation which aspires to make poetry accessible to all, especially those who face the greatest barriers to creative opportunities.

Kirli Saunders, proud Gunai woman and poet, designed PIFL to support First Nations contemporary poets, artists and students to connect with Elders, Language Custodians and community on country to learn First Nation languages through poetry and the arts. The aim of PIFL is to strengthen the connection of First Nations students to country, language and community in order to empower them to feel pride in their cultural identities resulting in enhanced overall wellbeing.

This report reviews the impact of PIFL in 2018, designed as a pilot year conducted in NSW. RR will use the findings from this evaluation to inform the roll-out of the program in 2019 into Queensland and the Northern Territory, and 2020 nationally.

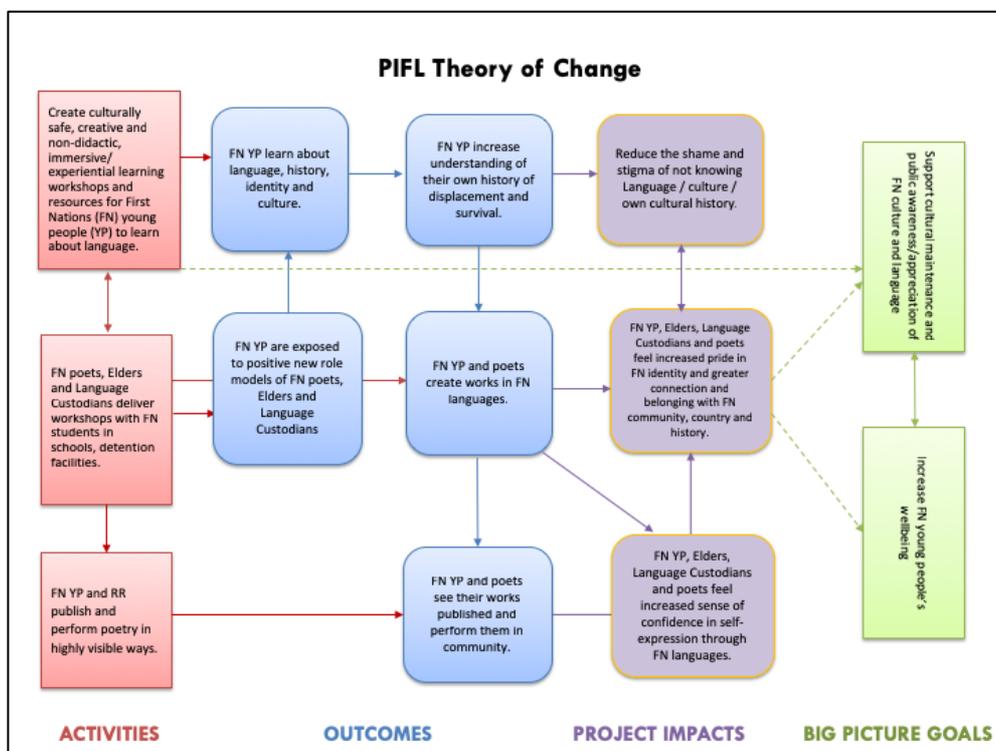
3.1 PIFL Theory of Change

A theory of change is an outline of what we think will happen as a result of certain activities. It outlines:

- the big picture goals which the program is contributing to over the long-term
- the impacts we expect to see over the term of this project, for wider communities and the target beneficiaries (First Nations young people as well as poets, Elders and Language Custodians)
- the intermediate outcomes and activities which lead to these impacts

We can summarise our theory of change about Red Room's Poetry in First Languages (PIFL) program as per the following diagram.

Figure 1: PIFL Theory of Change



This theory of change provides the basis for our evaluation framework which is broken down as follows:

- Outputs: The nature and level of activity undertaken as part of the program and the selected demographics of participants reached.
- Experience: Participants’ experience, including their views of intrinsic reward and integrity of process.
- Impacts: Ways in which participants change as a result of the program.

4 Method of Collection

We adopted a mixed methods approach to collecting data. At the start of 2018, we trialed a written survey. Red Room Poetry conducted the survey, but it became evident from direct observation and Red Room staff experience that the survey was too cumbersome for students. We also trialed a visual ‘before/after’ handout for students, which was much easier to implement. The handout asked students to use words or pictures to describe how they had felt before the workshop, and how they felt after the workshop. There was also a question at the bottom of the page asking what students had liked the most about the program, and what Red Room could change to make the program better.

This involved a greater workload in the analysis of the qualitative data, but the data was more meaningful as the handout was better understood by students of varying literacy levels, was faster to implement and therefore more likely to be completed by the students.

Red Room Poetry staff also conducted interviews with poets, Elders and Custodians following an interview guide, and sought feedback from teachers and we have incorporated their comments in our analysis of impacts.

3. Outputs of the Program

In 2018, PIFL:

- **Engaged** more than 350 First Nations students, 500 community members and more than 1,500 non-First Nations young people
- **Published** more than 300 poems in 11 First Nation languages
- **Reached** audiences of 300,000+ through live performances, bus poetry and artistic installations
- **Employed** 24 First Nations poets, Elders and Language Custodians
- **Provided** NESA accredited professional development for 120+ participants
- **Connected** First Nations poets with an estimated 40 schools and communities across NSW

4.1 Workshops

Day-long workshops with First Nation students formed the core of the PIFL 2018 program. Workshops generally involved poetry writing sessions, poetry readings, dance, bush tucker and medicine knowledge and art sessions. In 2018 through the PIFL workshop program, Red Room Poetry:

- Delivered 30 PIFL workshops
- Engaged 366 First Nations students from 39 schools and communities
- Employed 24 First Nations poets, Elders and Language Custodians

95% of the schools and communities had no other access to language programs. For these schools, PIFL was a one-of-a-kind opportunity. Of the 39 schools and communities, just two employ Language Custodians.¹

Workshops were held on Gundungurra, Gumea Dharawal, Dharawal, Yuin and Gadigal Country.

- PIFL Gundungurra workshops were held with Moss Vale High School, Moss Vale Public School and Mittagong Public School, by Kirli Saunders (Gundungurra Custodian) with support from Aunty Trish Levett (Gundungurra Custodian) and Aunty Velma Mulcahy (Gundungurra Elder).
- On Dharawal country, workshops were delivered to students from Bargo Public School, Wollongong Performing Arts High School, Waniora Public School, Warrawong

¹ Nowra East Public School, NSW and Ntaria School, Northern Territory.

High School, Warrawong Public School and Kemblawarra Public School. The program engaged Lyndsay Urquhart (Dhurga poet), Aunty Trish Levett (Gundungurra Custodian), Aunty Jodi Edwards (Proud Yuin woman and Dharawal Custodian), and Nick Paton (Ngunnawal educator)

- The PIFL Yuin program was held at Bundanon Trust, with students from Nowra East Public School, North Nowra Public School and Jervis Bay Public School. The program was led by Gunai poet Kirli Saunders with the guidance and support of Jacob Morris and Adrian Webster (Gumea and Dharawal Language Custodians).
- The PIFL Gadigal program was led by Gadigal poet and Language Custodian Joel Davison, Gunai poet Kirli Saunders and the First Nations Education teams from Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens and Art Gallery of NSW. These workshops engaged students from Laramba School and Ntaria School in the Northern Territory and students from Alexandria Park Community School in Sydney to create poems in Gadigal, Western Arrernte, Anmatjere and Warlpiri.

4.2 Publications and Performances

Publication and performances also form an integral part of the PIFL approach. Previous Red Room evaluations² have shown that public acknowledgement and seeing the work professionally displayed amplifies the pride and confidence impacts for participants and promotes First Nations culture and languages to non-First Nations communities. In 2018, poetic works were published in print, online, on buses, through multi-media art installations at Darling Harbour and Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney and live performances.

Publications included:

- 16 commissioned poems published in Barkindji, Wiradjuri, Gadigal, Gumea Dharawal, Dhurga and Dharawal
- 294 student poems in Bundjalung, Gundungurra, Dharawal, Gumea Dharawal, Gadigal, Anmatjere, Warlpiri and Western Arrernte published online
- Student poems published in three school murals painted by Yuin/Gundungurra raised artist, Rheanna Lotter, on Gundungurra country
- Student poems published on six buses in the Illawarra region, viewed more than 600,000 times by 100,000+ road users³
- *Cookaroo Flow* artistic installation of poems in Anmatjere, Warlpiri, Western Arrernte and Gadigal, reaching audiences of 100,000+

² Bailey and Yang (2013) *Red Room Poetry in Schools Evaluation*, Bailey and Yang: Sydney.

³ Estimate based on multiplying the five buses x 100 days (5 days per week over five months) x the average daily traffic count at the intersection of Gladstone Ave and Crown St, Wollongong (6,098): NSW Transport Roads and Maritime Services (2018) [Traffic Volume Viewer](#). Road users based on the number of registered vehicles in Wollongong as at the 2016 Census (approximately 115,000): [Australian Bureau of Statistics \(2017\) Census of Population and Housing, Australian Bureau of Statistics: Canberra](#).

Live events and performances included:

- PIFL performances for community NAIDOC events held on Dharawal and Gundungurra country engaged 500+ community members

Commissioned poems published and performed for *Tumbalong Gatherers* installation at Darling Harbour, reaching audiences of 100,000+

4.3 Additional PIFL Activities in 2018

In addition to the core student workshop program outlined above, Red Room Poetry conducted a range of PIFL-related activities which significantly extended the reach of the program. These included a PIFL workshop with residents of a diversionary centre, digital learning for NSW students, workshops in Western Sydney and professional development for public servants and educators.

- A PIFL Bundjalung workshop at Balund-a Diversionary Centre with 90% First Nation inmates, led by Murri poet Lionel Fogarty and Murri musician Joe Geia, with the support of Bundajung Elder Uncle Lewis Walker.
- *Pathways to Dreaming* workshops in partnership with Western Sydney University led by Dhurga poet Lyndsay Urquhart, reaching 83 students aged 9-10 years from 14 Western Sydney schools.
- *Schools Reconciliation Challenge* digital workshops in collaboration with the NSW Reconciliation Council, led by Gunai poet Kirli Saunders in partnership with the Museum of Art and Applied Science (MAAS), reaching 1,524 students from 20 schools.
- *PIFL Professional Development and Performances* for the NSW English Teachers Association (ETA) Annual Conference and the Wollongong City Council Annual Reconciliation Conference
- NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) Accredited PIFL courses developed for face-to-face and digital delivery, contributing one hour of accredited professional development at the 'proficient' career stage, addressing [NSW Education Standard Descriptors 1.4.2⁴, 2.4.2⁵ and 2.5.2⁶](#)

⁴ 'Design and implement effective teaching strategies that are responsive to the local community and cultural setting, linguistic background and histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.' NSW Education Standards Authority (2018) *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*, NSW Education Standards Authority: Sydney: 9.

⁵ 'Provide opportunities for students to develop understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages.' *Ibid.*: 11.

⁶ 'Apply knowledge and understanding of effective teaching strategies to support students' literacy and numeracy achievement.' *Ibid.*

4. The Impact of the Program

This chapter reviews the impact of the workshop program with students, looking at the following dimensions:

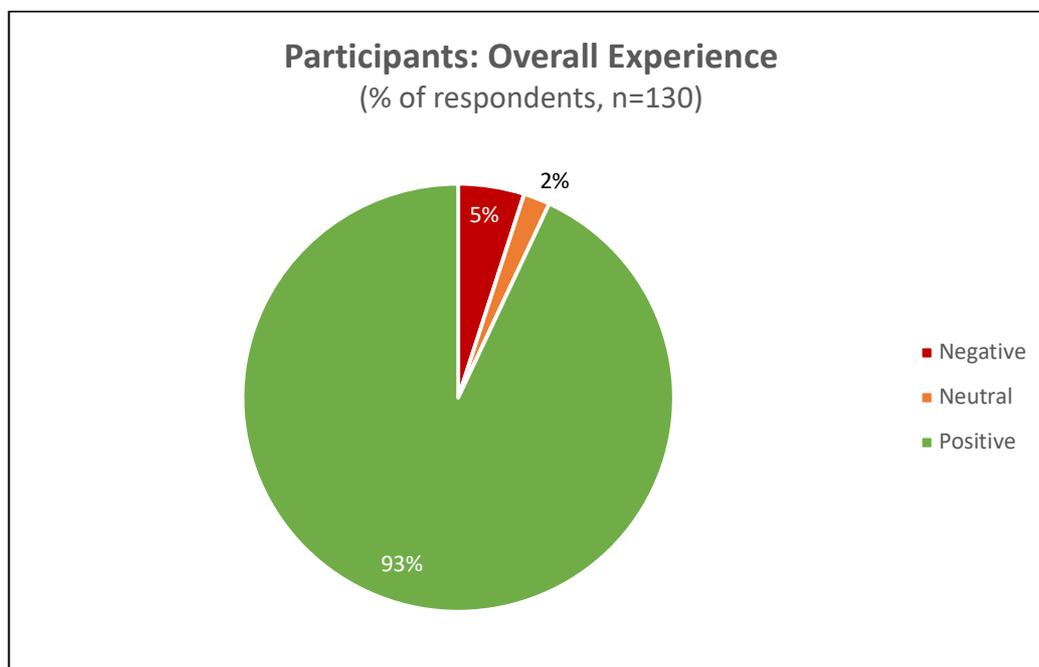
- Overall experience
- Intrinsic experience
- Personal capacity development
- Belonging, connection and pride

5.1 Overall Experience

The overwhelming majority of participants reported a positive experience of the program (94%). Of the 130 respondents, only six reported a negative experience. We have reviewed their feedback in the section on suggestions for improvements.

'It was the best experience I have ever had. Now I know more about culture.' – North Nowra Public School Student

Figure 2: Participants' Overall Experience



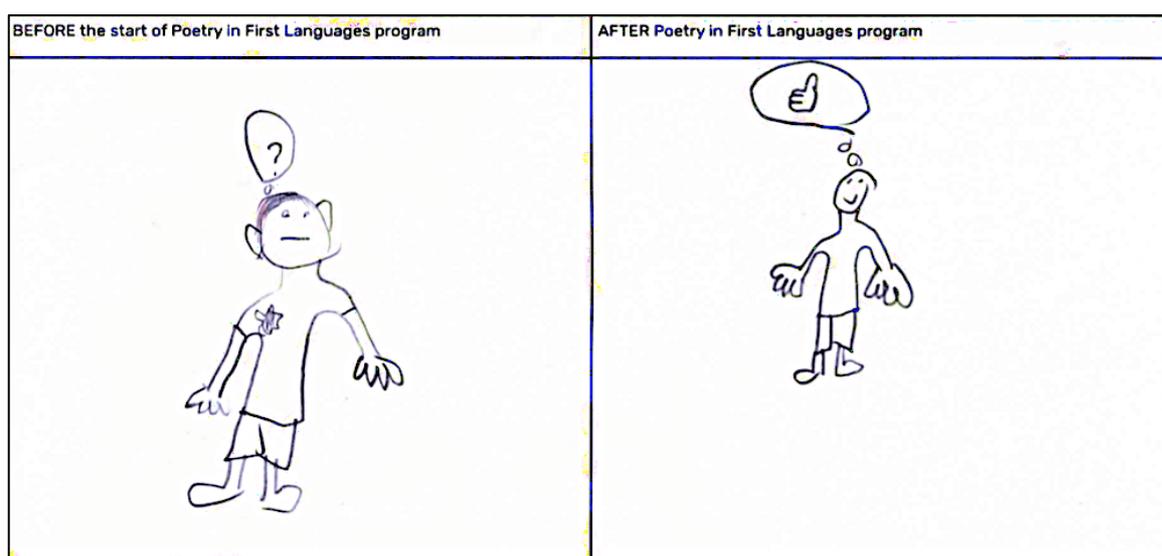
5.2 Intrinsic Experience

The majority of participants reported having a rewarding, fun, enjoyable and enriching experience.

For example:

- 41% of participants were in a positive frame of mind coming into the program, feeling happy or excited. By the end of the program, this had increased: 50% of participants reported feeling happy, and/or that they had fun.
- Before the program, 35% of participants reported feeling apprehensive about the program – some were nervous, scared, confused or shy. After the program, this had dropped to just 2% of participants.

Figure 3: Example Student Reflection



Students also had fun in the workshops, which was essential to making the workshops effective. As Nick Paton observed,

[I've seen] [A]bsolute confidence building for the children - the kids are having fun, engaging with each other, some of the shier kids - we are seeing strengths in them that weren't showing up before the workshops. –

Nick Paton, Ngannawal educator

Students were interested in all aspects of culture, including learning about local foods, stories, cultural and spiritual meanings. Nick went on to observe,

[...]they are loving learning about country, learning about language - really

having something to identify with. – Nick Paton, Ngunnawal educator

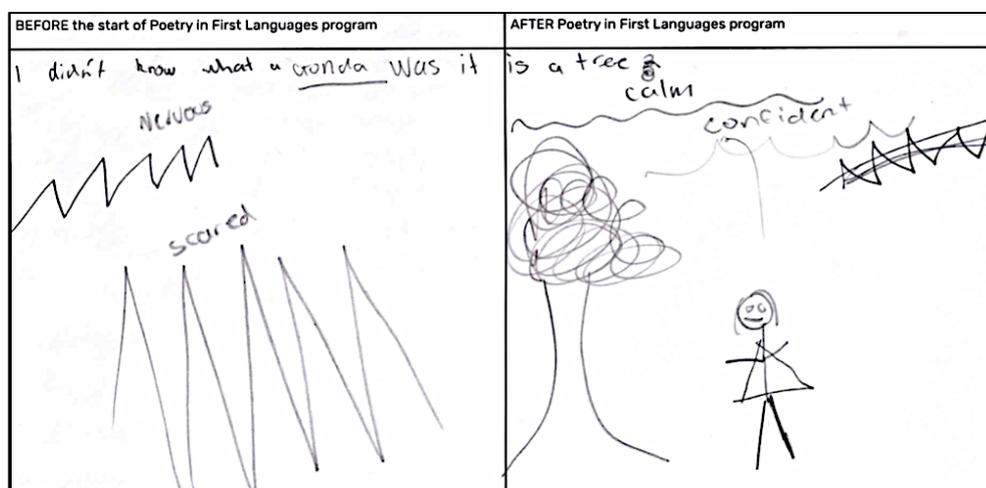
Teachers confirmed that the students enjoyed being part of an ‘amazing opportunity.’

Just by watching their interaction and engagement yesterday I could honestly see that they all enjoyed being a part of this amazing opportunity to work with you. – Belinda Allen, Assistant Principal, Mittagong Public School

I have heard nothing but positive feedback from the kids about the day and I love that you were able to bring out such creativity and more importantly, connection to culture in everyone involved. Your immediate connection and the approachability of both [facilitators] helped put them [the students] at ease, which is so important when you are asked to be vulnerable and creative. – Alexandra Bateman, English Teacher, Moss Vale High School

As a result of the program, 23% of participants reported feeling calm, relaxed or peaceful. This was particularly the case for the participants at workshops where activities were largely held outdoors.

Figure 4: Example Student Reflection



5.3 Personal Capacity Development

Participants learned new First Nations language skills, cultural knowledge, and how to express themselves through poetry. Because the program was fun and engaging, students transitioned from ‘unsure’ or ‘nervous’ at the start of the workshop to happy, ‘loud and proud’ by the end.

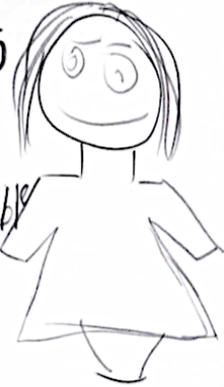
For example:

- Before the Program, 12% of participants wrote that they did not know much about language or culture.
- After the Program, 33% of participants wrote that they had learned a lot from the Program and now know much more than they did before, about language, culture and poetry.

Figure 5: Example Student Reflection

BEFORE the start of Poetry in First Languages program	AFTER Poetry in First Languages program
<p style="text-align: center;">nervous</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Happy</p> 

Figure 6: Example Student Reflection

BEFORE the start of Poetry in First Languages program	AFTER Poetry in First Languages program
<p>Nervous I shy Uncomfortable</p> 	<p>Confident I feel free Unnervous Comfortable Unshy</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">FREE</p> 

It was great to be learning about culture and our language. – Yuin Workshop Participant

I like knowing about my language. – Yuin Workshop Participant

The program instilled confidence in First Nations children about their language, identity and culture. Jacob Morris observed the change in students, who were singing ‘loud and proud’ by the end of the workshop.

To sing in language a whole song, when they aren’t in the choir and even a couple of times we did muck up, it was all still smiles and still fun that encouraged them to join in and get louder and louder. – Jacob Morris, Gumea Dharawal poet

5.4 Belonging, Connection and Pride

The workshops led to an increase in students’ confidence, connection and pride. For example, by the end of the workshop, 24% reported feeling proud, confident or smart.

I’ve learnt more than I originally knew. I am more proud of who I am. – Gundungurra Workshop Participant

[Before] that nothing I wrote would sound good. [After] like I can put words together to make something beautiful – sound beautiful and express my feelings on paper. – Gundungurra Workshop Participant

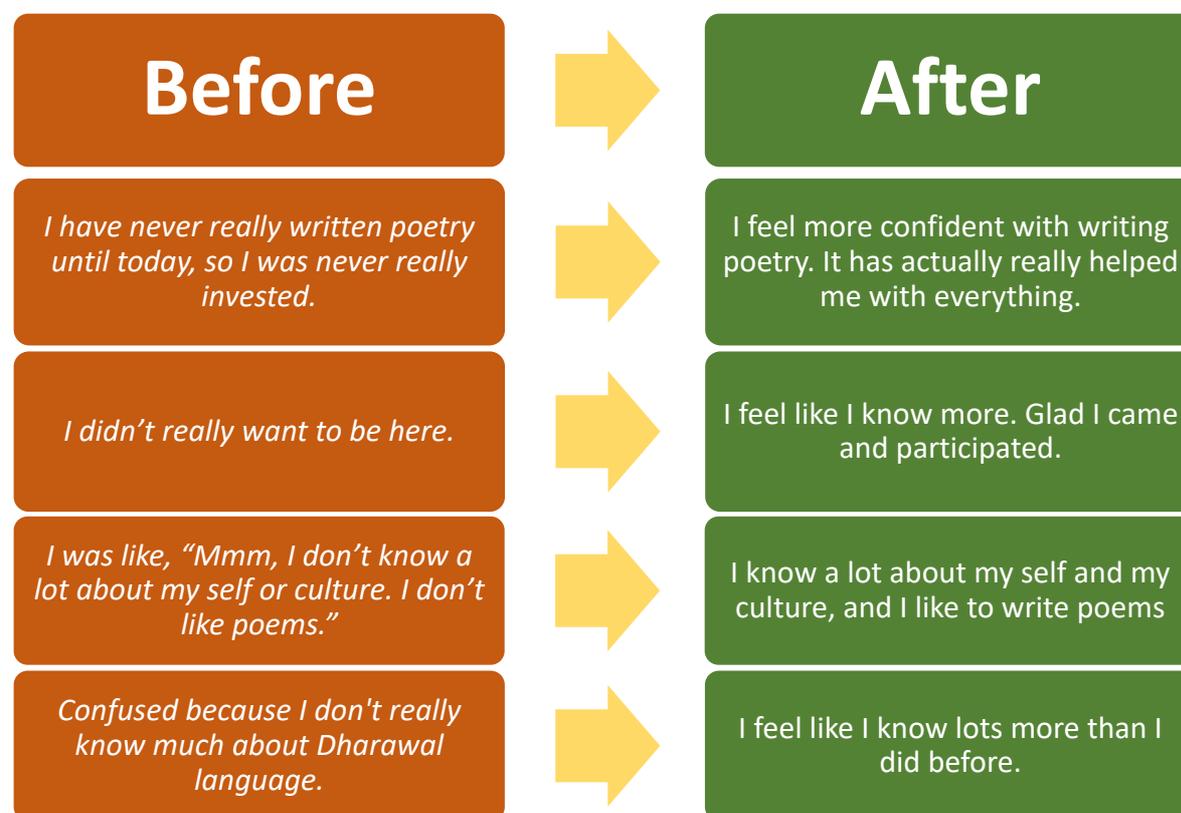
[My favourite part was] when we were reconnecting to country and self. – Yuin Workshop Participant

We learned a lot of other language and were loud and proud. – Yuin Workshop Participant

Many participants shifted from feeling disinterested and lacking confidence at the start of the day, to feeling engaged, confident and more knowledgeable about themselves and culture by the end of the workshop. As Jacob Morris observed:

Some [of the kids] were emotional about not knowing things, but by the end of the day they had done a complete 180 and were proud to talk [...] A couple of the kids were really shy about doing language and cultural things...and then to see those shy kids at the end of the day joining in and talking loud and proud - it worked [...]
– Jacob Morris, Gumea Dharawal poet

Figure 7: Examples of Before and After Statements, Workshop Participants



Some children discovered family relationships as a result of the workshop, and are continuing to deepen these connections.

*You talk to the kids about how we're related to some of them, how they're related to each other. **It connected them to their own family within their own school that they didn't know.** [For example] two girls at Nowra East Public School found out that they were cousins and I got to explain to them how they're related and **now they have sleep overs and spend time with each other on the weekends. It's deadly.***

– Jacob Morris, Gumea Dharawal poet

The Gadigal workshop, held at the Sydney Royal Botanical Gardens, brought together First Nations students from south Sydney with students from Laramba in the Northern Territory. Alex Kilpatrick, Programs Manager for the National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy, observed that the workshop was a safe space for Aboriginal students to connect with culture.

I was really impressed with the way the [south Sydney] students connected with the material - particularly the boys. It was obvious that

*they were really interested in the material and are keen to connect and learn about culture. **It was also obviously a really safe and welcoming space for them to share and participate** - they were keen to contribute and encouraged each other to connect with the material and to put thought into what they produced. – Alex Kilpatrick, Programs Manager, National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy*

Alex observed that the students from Laramba derived benefit from learning the self-expressive and self-reflective tools of poetry.

*The Laramba kids particularly seemed to be having fun with the descriptive language - using metaphor and imagery to describe the gardens, and this was a **really good way for them to think about place** in terms of being in a new environment and comparing it back to their home environment. – Alex Kilpatrick, Programs Manager, National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy*

Josh Brown, Aboriginal Programs Coordinator for the Sydney Botanic Gardens and Centennial Parklands, observed the advantage of bringing two ‘very different’ groups together to learn about common themes.

*It was great to see two very different groups of Aboriginal kids and staff coming together to learn about common themes being language, poetry, art and native plants. [It] was awesome to hear from some of the kids and staff from NT about native foods, tools and weapons that they use and how the ones here are similar or different. **[It] was also really good to see the kids sharing and pointing on the Aboriginal map of Australia of their local Aboriginal community or where their families are from and to share some of their own culture with each other.** – Josh Brown, Aboriginal Programs Coordinator, Botanic Gardens and Centennial Parklands*

We analysed student ‘before’ and ‘after’ PIFL responses by a simple emotional valence and arousal scale of -5 to +5.⁷ As the following graphs show, the majority of students were in a negative emotional state before the workshop, feeling apprehensive, lacking in confidence, sad and/or bored. After the workshop, the majority of students were in a positive emotional state, feeling confident, excited, free, calm, peaceful, happy and/or proud.

⁷ ‘Emotional valence’ refers to positive or negative affectivity, and ‘arousal’ refers to how calming or exciting a stimulus is. Plotting emotional valence and arousal against each other can help to understand change in terms of both emotional and energy states. For example, if a person feels excited, this would be plotted graphically as both positive arousal and emotional valence. If a person feels calm, this constitutes negative arousal but positive emotional valence. If a person feels nervous, this translates as negative emotional valence but positive arousal.

Figure 8: Before and After PIFL: Student Responses



5. Elders, Poets and Custodians

For the Elders, poets and Custodians involved in the program, PIFL was deeply affirming of culture and language, and offered hope that these would be passed on to the next generation.

Aunty Trish Levett described the importance of keeping culture alive through programs like PIFL.

*[B]y actually coming here, they are learning about art, they are learning about the stories behind the animals they are drawing today. **It's about keeping our culture alive** and passing down that knowledge to the next generation. – Aunty Trish Levett, Gundungurra Custodian*

Working with the program developed poet Jeanine Leanne's confidence to write in language and deepened her connection to Country.

*For me the PIFL project was like a release. **I had long thought of writing some language poetry, but did not have the confidence, until this opportunity came my way.** Writing for this project also made me reflect on the power of simplicity in writing as I had always in the forefront of my mind that they would be translated and I wanted to keep the focus on the Country where the language belongs. It was also another way in which I connected with Country, through learning some of the words that were born on her soil and flow through her waters. – Jeannine Leanne, Poet*

Poet and Language Custodian Jacob Morris explained how crucial programs like PIFL are to 'empowering younger generations.'

*We use the word Aboriginal and that's a Latin word, we don't even use our own words to identify ourselves. Using language, it's better to see how we look at the world and how we express ourselves through language [...] It's crucial that we do this [PIFL], **it's our identity, self-expression and empowering the younger generations.** – Jacob Morris, Language Custodian and Poet*

Poet Paul Collis wrote a letter to Red Room Poetry, in which he told the story of his lifelong alienation from his grandfather's language. His story exemplifies the profound impact PIFL can have on individuals and communities. The following is an excerpt from Paul's letter.

Figure 9: Excerpt, Letter from Paul Collis to Red Room Poetry, 2018

"Why don't you teach me Barkindji, Grandfather?" I asked when I was 11 years old. Everyone around me spoke in English then...and I think for that reason and time and difference, Grandfather said to me, "Who you gonna talk to Son, when I'm gone?"

Grandfather had another reason for not teaching me Barkindji too. That reason being, that he thought that the Barkindji language would die out because so much of the language had to do with Law and 'Country' and Sacredness - ceremonies etc. And, to learn to speak Barkindji, as he did, means 'living' Barkindji – it's a living language. And I was never going to live Barkindji, not as he did, because of the colonisation thing. I was never going to ever be able to 'Live Barkindji' as he did when he was born...

And so, he thought that the language would die.

There was no one speaking Barkindji there in Bourke, not that I heard anyway during my childhood - all the old people had gone 'quiet' - stopped speaking...still shocked from the brutality by whitefullas, and so depressed from the loss of their lifestyle, Law and Country country...and also many old people were appalled at the sexual behaviors of many of their kinfolk who were 'marrying-up' with cousins - breaking traditional Barkindji laws. Laws that were sacredly held, taught and practiced by Barkindji people throughout our history and back there in Bourke in the 60's, right there, before their eyes, these poor Elders, these aunt and uncles were witnessing so much shocking 'dismissal of their language and culture' by their own people and by everyone else also, I think - Police, Welfare, Schools, whitefullas etc.

Many of the old people stopped talking. Real lonely they looked to me. I spent a lot of time with old people growing up in Bourke, I loved them so much...all I wanted to be when I grew up was to be like Grandfather - gently and wise and kind - (not a 'big-noter' or anything crass like that), and many of the old people were witnessing countrymen and women, leaving their kids and drinking alcohol, ('partying'), falling down. With the loss of country and language and law we were in turmoil. Them old people witnessed so much violence - violence upon themselves, and also, family violence that was happening around them. So they stopped speaking – no one was listening to them it seemed. But I was listening.

Grandfather was wrong on that occasion, about our language becoming redundant, or dead, for I believe that I might have been empowered by knowing the Barkindji language, and being able to conceptualise things very differently in Barkindji compared to, in English. Barkindji language is still spoken and being taught today! Praise the stars! But I don't speak it, I know a few words in Barkindji, that's about all. But, I written two poems in Barkindji! Now, that is so unreal, and so good to me.

6. Satisfaction with the Process

Participants reported a positive experience of the process, and many hoped to do the program again. When asked what they liked about the program, 54% reported that they liked the sense of connecting with Country, Elders and poets.

I liked how [the poets] made me feel confident. They taught me the easy way to write a poem. And they taught me more Dharawal words. – Dharawal Workshop Participant

I liked that you helped everyone with the poetry. – Dharawal Workshop Participant

I liked to learn from [the poets and Elders] about their stories and where they are from. – Dharawal Workshop Participant

To use our language I felt happy and I learned a little bit about Gadigal language. It was an honour to learn more about the Gadigal people. – Gadigal Workshop Participant

Figure 10: What did you like about the workshop? (% of respondents (n=41))



100% of respondents from the Gadigal, Yuin and Gundungurra workshops reported a positive experience. 89% of respondents from the Dharawal workshop also had a positive experience, with only 3% reporting a neutral experience and 9% reporting a negative experience (six students).

Of these six students, three came into the workshop in a low mood at the start of the workshop, and the workshop did not change this. The other three students came in with positive expectations but reported being bored by the end of the workshop. For future programs, they suggested more physical activities, more stories with the Elders and a higher proportion of high school students in the workshop group.

7.1 Suggestions for Improvements

Poets, participants, Elders and Custodians were generally very positive about PIFL. They made a number of recommendations about what to maintain and what could potentially be improved, if more resources were available.

19 of the student participants made suggestions for improvements. Of these, ten asked for more physical activities in the future (53%). The other nine suggestions related to increasing: food during the workshop (2); time for Elder stories (1); proportion of high school students (1); amount of language work (1); drawing activities (1); and opportunities to speak (1).

Multifaceted Poetic Practices

Most facilitators and participants found poetry a useful tool for sharing culture and language. From our analysis of the student responses, it appears that students at both low and high literacy levels found poetry in its various forms, including the use of song, dance, art and nature, to be a useful tool in developing confidence and knowledge.

Poetry is a really good way to introduce kids to culture because it's not only a way to learn about language but also self-expression. Self-expression is a big part of our culture through our songs, art, dance and stories. It's an easy introduction, it's not an overwhelming experience. –
Jacob Morris, Language Custodian, Teacher and Poet

The Dharawal workshop was the only workshop to attract a handful of negative responses. This may be because of the workshops, it had the least amount of time spent on outdoors or physical activities (such as dance, song and nature activities). **We recommend that Red Room continue to use multifaceted approaches to poetry, and integrate as much outdoor and embodied poetic activities as possible.**

Group Work

Working in groups was also considered a useful approach, allowing peer-to-peer learning.

The kids can work off each other, they're all learning it together, so they can share their knowledge of what they're learning, it's an even playing

field and they can share and support each other.
 – **Jacob Morris, Language Custodian, Teacher and Poet**

Duration

Elders, poets, Custodians and students called for more time learning language and culture. Suggestions included longer workshops over a number of days, or workshops at a regular interval over a longer period.

To learn it [language] properly and engage with it, certainly needs to have more time dedicated to it or ongoing learning of language back at their schools, particularly the Sydney kids. If we were to do same thing with school groups around Sydney in 2019 – perhaps a teaching resource that can be taken back to school for it to continue and build upon...

– **Josh Brown, Aboriginal Programs Coordinator, Botanic Gardens and Centennial Parklands**

Workshops on Country

Elders and Custodians suggested the program may have a more profound impact if held outdoors, and on Country.

I think it would benefit from being on Country – Crooked River (Gerroa to the Shoalhaven River up to Kangaroo Valley) and the Dharawal language as well, I'm happy to help out in Wollongong and Shellharbour.

– **Jacob Morris, Language Custodian, Teacher and Poet**

Logistics

Facilitators made a number of logistical recommendations for next time. Josh Brown suggested:

- Improve the coordination of the different locations of activities
- More time for the art and poetry activities
- Explore ways to connect with the Art Gallery of NSW, which houses artwork from the communities which the students were from

Lyndsay Urquhart suggested a meeting of all the poets involved.

My suggestion for the future of this program might be that there could be a physical meeting of all the poets, who could meet and practice some workshops that would prepare us for how to write poetry, and maybe the opportunity to talk to each other in language, read each others' poems, and make comments. – **Lyndsay Urquhart, Emerging Dhurga Poet**

7. Conclusion

The 2018 *Poetry in First Languages* program has demonstrated positive impacts for First Nation young people, Elders, poets and Custodians. Young people's confidence, sense of pride and connection to country, self and culture increased as a result of the program.

BYP Group recommends that PIFL be continued and if possible, deepened to allow longer or repeat engagement with the program by students, and expanded to reach more communities. We recommend that Red Room Poetry:

- Maintain the model of working closely with Elders, Language Custodians and poets and using multiple poetic artforms ranging across poetry creative and visual arts
- Continue to hold programs offsite in locations which allow for outdoor activities and connection with nature and Country

There is potential to develop a model that also engages non-First Nation students. However, the need for creative language programs for First Nations young people is still largely unmet, so we recommend that Red Room Poetry continue to focus its energies in this space.

Appendix: Evaluation Framework

Table 1: Evaluation Framework: Outputs

Output Category	Dimensions	Method of Collection
Description of activities	Count of activities	Red Room Poetry information
	Type of activities	
	Locations	
Participants reached	Count of participants reached	
	Identify as First Nations	
	Opportunity to do this kind of activity without PIFL	

Table 11: Evaluation Framework: Experience

Hypothesis	Impact Category	Experience	Method of Collection
Intrinsic rewarding experience and integrity of process are at the heart of social impact in arts and creative projects.	Intrinsically rewarding experience	Fun and enjoyment	Observations Before/after drawings and comments by participants / teachers
		Personal resonance and emotional response	
		Challenge and cognitive stimulation	
		Engagement and concentration	
		Achievement and pride	
	Satisfaction with the process	Sense of welcome, creative and cultural safety and being adequately supported	
		Sense of mutuality, ownership, co-creation, creative equality and being respected	
	Positive learning experience	Poets, Language Custodians, Elders and RR staff model positive behaviours and attitudes and facilitate learning	

Table 12: Evaluation Framework: Impact

Hypothesis	Impact Category	Impacts			Method of Collection
		Skills and Knowledge	Attitudinal Change	Behavioural Change	
An intrinsically rewarding experience can lead to personal capacity development	Personal capacity development	New skills in FN languages	Increase confidence in use of FN languages	FN YP seek out more knowledge of FN languages and try to use language more often	Observations Before/after drawings and comments
		Better understanding of own history of displacement and survival	Reduced shame and stigma of not knowing language / cultural history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FN YP express increased pride in FN culture and themselves as FN people FN YP seek out Elders or other knowledge holders to learn more about FN culture FN YP seek out ways of being more involved in FN culture 	
An intrinsically rewarding experience can lead to changes in the way people feel about others, themselves and the world.	Belonging, connection and pride	New or deeper knowledge of own FN cultural history and heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased pride in and sense of FN identity Increased feeling of connection with FN culture, history, language, country, community Increased respect for FN culture, and themselves as proud FN people 		
The experience provides Elders with another avenue to enhance their role within community and increase the transfer of knowledge, culture, and language.	Cultural maintenance	New skills in imparting knowledge to FN YP.	The contemporary role of Elders in maintaining culture and contributing to community wellbeing is further strengthened, honoured and understood.	New connections made by Elders enables them to continue their vital contribution to community wellbeing.	Interviews with poets and Elders

Appendix: Poets, Artists and Custodians 2018

Poets

Kirli Saunders (Gunai, emerging)
Paul Collis (Barkindji, established)
Joel Davison, (Gadigal, emerging)
Joel Deaves (Gumea Dharawal, emerging)
Lionel Fogarty (Murri, established)
Joe Geia (Murri, established)
Jeanine Leane (Wiradjuri, established)
Jacob Morris (Gumea Dharawal, emerging)
Lyndsay Urquhart (Dhurga, emerging)
Adrian Webster (Gumea Dharawal, emerging)

Poet Mentors

Jeanine Leane (Wiradjuri, established)

Language Custodians

Aunty Jodi Edwards (Proud Yuin woman and Dharawal Custodian)
Aunty Velma Mulcahy (Gundungurra Elder)
Aunty Trish Levett (Gundungurra Custodian)
Jacob Morris (Gumea Dharawal Custodian)
Vicki Parsley (Dhurga Custodian)
Elaine Lomas (Wiradjuri Custodian)
Kevin Knight (Barkindji Custodian)
Wayne Knight (Barkindji Custodian)
Joel Davison (Gadigal Custodian)

Artists and Educators

Rheanna Lotter (Yuin, artist)
Nick Paton (Ngunnawal, educator)
Aunty Trish Levett (Gundungurra, artist and educator)
Jacob Morris (Gumea Dharawal Custodian)
Kirli Saunders (Gunai, emerging)

About BYP Group

BYP Group is a specialist evaluation, research and strategy consulting firm in the public and social justice sectors. We work in Australia and internationally. BYP Group comprises three core principals: Jackie Bailey, Hung-Yen Yang and Sarah Penhall. We also work with a network of professionals on a project needs basis.

We have been appointed as the Social Impact Evaluation Partner for Creative Victoria, 2018-2020. BYP Group is the only non-US organisation to receive a Highly Commended Createquity Arts Research Award for our work on Indigenous representation in Australia's performing arts. We are also research associates for Cox Inall Ridgeway, a leading national Indigenous communications consultancy.

Our clients include the USA National Performance Network, Australia Council for the Arts, Diversity Arts Australia, Create NSW, Creative Victoria, Arts Centre Melbourne, Multicultural Arts Victoria, Asialink, Film Victoria, Deakin University, Western Sydney University, Macquarie University, NSW Health, Cox Inall Ridgeway, Penrith City Council, Wagga Wagga City Council and others.

We are professional members of the Australian Social and Market Research Society and the Australasian Evaluation Society. We are also members of the Federal government's select research and evaluation panel and the Ian Potter Foundations Evaluation Panel.

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