



Teaching Artist Statement

Rickeeta Walley



Who am I?

My name is **Rickeeta Walley** and I am a Whadjuk Nyoongar woman. I was born and raised in Whadjuk country, in Perth Western Australia.

I have been blessed to be raised with a strong cultural upbringing and am very connected to my Nyoongar identity and ancestry.

My family

My father ensured that we were raised with our Nyoongar language, beliefs, and practices, and understood our cultural lore. We were lucky to spend a lot of time out in the bush, learning about our old people's ways and connecting to our boodja (country).

My mother is a proud Southern Nyoongar woman and so I was lucky to learn from both of my parents, as well as my aunties and uncles.

Being Nyoongar

I'm very proud to be a Nyoongar. I feel connected to the place I live on, as more than just a home and place of work, but also as a direct connection to an ancient lineage.



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Country/Place

I am blessed to have thousands of years connected to the place I live on and also to be raised with the cultural knowledge linked here.

When I walk on my country, I know my ancestors walked the same trails before me.

I think our connection to boodja (country) is still maintained today despite our change in lifestyle.

Our practices have had to adapt but we maintain this connection through speaking language and using our native plants and animals for food, medicine and tools -sustainably of course!

We also maintain our connection through our ceremonial practices such as dances, song and following old lore that has been handed down through generations.

Nyoongar culture

In the Nyoongar culture, we are given totems at birth. These totems are called "Booranga" and are usually a local animal or plant. My booranga is the Kulbardi, the Magpie.

Places of significance

Kings Park has multiple names, as many tribes travelled there and referred to it with their own unique names.

This place is very significant for Nyoongar People. People would come here to hunt, camp, ceremony. It's linked to our Dreaming stories, our creation stories, we hold onto that significance today.

Teaching respectfully

I think that creating artwork in the sand is a great way to connect to country and that you don't necessarily have to do Aboriginal symbols. I encourage students to use natural materials (without picking from trees) to create an artwork that they can leave on the ground, whether it be a little drawing in the sand of a sculpture made from sticks and leaves.

Doing culturally engaging activities such as seasonal murals and planting native gardens, is something I encourage.

It's important to engage local custodial Aboriginal people to be a part of these activities, even if it's simple initial consultation. This will ensure the information being presented is correct, and that the process is culturally safe and appropriate.

The use of symbols can differ depending on the Aboriginal country that you are residing on. Although there are common symbols that can be understood across most Indigenous nations, it is still important to check what they mean in your local area.





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Teaching students about sustainability

I encourage students to think about different ways that they can make a difference and care for the country that we all live on.

This can include active community practices such as picking up rubbish, planting native vegetation in your garden, and thinking about reduction of energy and water usage (shorter showers etc.)

I also ask students to think about their favourite native animals, and some of the ways that they can help to protect their homes and environment for the future. This could be something as simple as planting a tree that their favourite animal eats.

Sustainability

Sustainability is one of the most important aspects of our cultural practices but is something that can be adopted by everyone.

Cultural knowledge

A lot of the knowledge that we are talking about today is very old, ancient knowledge. We are very lucky to still hold on to a lot of that today.

So many of these practices help to further our sustainability here in this country, our love and care for the country and the respect for it.





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Bushland Treasures

Our Bushland is so full of treasures. Whether it be the food you can find, the medicines that are here, there are all kinds of resources, you just need to know what to look for and the six season system help Nyoongar to be able to do that.



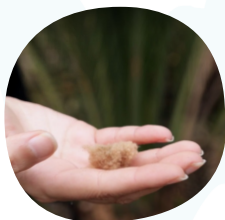
This palm is called a Zamia Palm and is known in Nyoongar as Djiridji. This palm is pre-historic, and has existed since the time of the Dinosaurs.

It drops a toxic red seed, once a year, during the Djeran season. Nyoongar people would leech this seed of the toxins, so that it could be used to make food and drinks. The leeching process could take up to 2 weeks.



The tree sap comes from the Marri tree. This tree is easily identified by its fruit, the gumnut!

The sap exuding from this tree is called Mayat and is a naturally occurring antiseptic. It was traditionally used to treat cuts and wounds, sore throats and even upset stomachs.



The fluff that I'm showing in the video is a naturally occurring substance that grows in the centre of the tree. This is a fantastic fire-starter and was used alongside traditional firesticks to build fires.

Sharing knowledge

We are diverse people with many diverse cultures present across this country.

There has been a long period in our history, in which the inclusion of Aboriginal voices and knowledge were omitted from the general public and education system. So it is now so important, and highly appreciated, when people engage with our cultures and learn about our shared history.

Our Aboriginal cultures are so rich and we have so much to share, and it's fantastic when people want to learn.

Rickeeta's advice for teachers

Lift up aboriginal voices, listen to Aboriginal people so we all benefit from this old cultural knowledge.

I recommend attending any local cultural events, including NAIDOC events in your area. This can be a great way to connect with the community and learn more about the local Aboriginal culture.

Students can also engage with resources that include Aboriginal voices, including films, TV, interviews, books and music.

