



New take on traditional art

Ben Smyth

PUPILS, teachers and parents at Bega Valley Public School celebrated NAIDOC Week early with an exhibition of art and culture.

As NAIDOC Week falls within the school holidays, BVPS hosted a morning tea and open day on the last day of term last Friday.

BVPS support teacher Mariclare Malone said an art exhibition in the school library "made a nice change" from just another assembly.

The school had special visits throughout the week from members of the local Indigenous community.

Warren Foster taught the pupils traditional dances, while Mark Rose played Indigenous games with them.

Grade 4/5 teacher and artist Kim Cook organised the major artwork created by her pupils in the vein of the renowned Archibull Prize.

Ms Malone also said Meegai women have been working with stage three Indigenous pupils for the



• Pupils from Bega Valley Public School Kindergarten 1F class explore the symbolism and Indigenous culture on display in the school library during last Friday's NAIDOC Week celebration.

past five weeks discussing the significance of symbols and sharing culture.

Unfortunately, poor weather caused the can-

cellation of a visit to Jigamy Farm, but there was no stopping the enjoyment of the art and culture on display during

the morning tea.

While classes each had their own time to explore the displays a video montage of photos and

footage of the pupils' creating their artworks and taking part in the cultural workshops was projected on to the wall.

Inequality needs to be addressed

ACCORDING to the 2011 Census, Bega Valley Shire's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population stands at 905 people, of whom 874 were Aboriginal and 17 were Torres Strait Islanders - 14 identified as both.

The Census highlights some of the inequities that still exist between local Indigenous people and the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the shire.

These figures reflect the situation in other areas of Australia.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Bega Valley Shire are more likely to be unemployed, less likely to live in their own homes, will not live as long and will have less access to education.

Their health also remains a concern.

Life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Bega Valley is much lower than for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Only 4.8 per cent of the shire's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population are aged over 65.

However, 21.4 per cent of the shire's overall population is aged over 65.

Such a small proportion is an indication of continuing earlier death rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people due to poorer health outcomes and lifelong disadvantage.

The Census data does not paint a very flattering picture of the different outlook for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our shire compared to the broader community.

There are a number of innovative programs operating in the shire to address this level of inequality, but it is critical all levels of government work harder to address the inequities between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the broader community.

Every voice counts

THE Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) is aiming to strengthen connections with Indigenous voters in an effort to increase their participation with the electoral process.

Electoral commissioner Ed Killesteyn said Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are much less likely to enrol to vote than other Australians and many of those who are enrolled do not vote or vote incorrectly.

"We're calling on all Indigenous voters aged 18 and over to enrol to vote right now so they don't miss out on having a say at this year's federal election," Mr Killesteyn said.

"It's about all Australians having a say in who runs our country and who makes the decisions that affect our future."

"One vote can make a difference and I encourage all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to enrol and to encourage their friends and families to do the same," he said.

Enrolment forms can be picked up at any Australia Post outlet or Centrelink or Medicare Service Centre.

You can also enrol online at www.aec.gov.au/Indigenous.

Consultation a valuable education tool

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NEW president Dennis Scott says the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group is an important and valuable element in the education system.

According to its website, the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group is a not-for-profit organisation that provides advice on all matters relevant to education and training with the mandate this advice represents the Aboriginal community viewpoint.

"It promotes respect, empowerment and self-determination and believes the process of collaborative consultation is integral to equal partnership and fundamental to the achievement of equality," the website reads.

"The NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group advocates cultural affirmation, integrity and the pursuit of equality to ensure that the unique and diverse identity of Aboriginal students is recognised and valued."

Mr Scott said the AECG works with schools throughout the Bega

Valley, providing a source of information on Indigenous cultural practices and sensitivities.

"It's definitely important," Mr Scott said.

"It is great for schools to have a group to go to, to find out what's best for our kids."

"It's about sharing of culture and what's happening in education," he said.

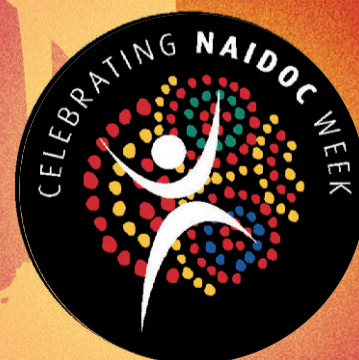
"It's a great thing to have our children educated and supported."

• For more information, visit www.aecg.nsw.edu.au.



• AECG president Dennis Scott peruses the Indigenous art on display at Bega Valley Public School with William Herbert-Scott and Saphron Scott.

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Bega Valley Shire Council

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www.begavalley.nsw.gov.au