

IOP DANCE PROJECT

Hip-Hop Indigenous Outreach Projects - Case Study

Background

Students from all schools across the Gannawarra Shire participated in an indigenous dance troop and cultural activity program between 3–6 March 2025.

Gannawarra Shire Council, Northern District Community Health, Mallee District Aboriginal Services, and the Kerang Elders and Leaders Group partnered to bring Indigenous Outreach Projects (IOP), Hip-Hop program to Gannawarra. With more than two decades of experience, IOP successfully uses dance and music to foster change and deliver healthy and positive messages around the theme 'Be Proud, No Shame, Respect'.

Northern District Community Health coordinated the event, which included a significant contribution of staff and resources, across multiple programs.

As part of the four-day program, more than 1,200 primary and secondary school students participated in one of seven workshops. The program also included a community night for Aboriginal families and a session with indigenous local children and youth programs, Kethawil Penbengbuk (Many Children) and Tyipen Kwe (Happy Friends).

The IOP project was designed to support local Aboriginal children and youth to stand loud and proud in their Aboriginality within their mainstream school environment. The sessions built on the local Aboriginal community's participation in the 20th anniversary of The Long Walk in 2024 in Melbourne which saw local families join in with festivities before attending the Australian Football League's Dreamtime at the 'G match between Essendon and Richmond. The IOP performed as part of pre-match festivities, and the community wanted to bring this activity to Gannawarra.

The project was funded by Gannawarra Shire Council through the Gannawarra Flood Recovery Program, Emergency Recovery Victoria, Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) and Northern District Community Health.

What did the program deliver?

- All 11 Gannawarra schools participated, plus Gunbower Primary School
- More than 1,200 school students participated in music, dance and cultural activities
- Students engaged with 'Be Proud, No Shame, Respect' messaging
- Students received high energy hip-hop dance instruction
- Two non-school engagement sessions were held with the local Aboriginal community
- The Gannawarra visit was documented in a video clip developed by IOP
- Four local young women involved in the Sistas youth program acted as youth mentors for the four-day program and developed leadership skills assisting the IOP team
- A local young person provided the Acknowledgement of Country
- Northern District Community Health delivered an Aboriginal cultural program with a local Elder, including bush tucker, local language, singing, instruments and stories.



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What did the program achieve:

- Excellent engagement with all 11 local primary and secondary schools participating
- Exposure to Aboriginal music, dance and culture for all primary and secondary school students
- Local indigenous students supported to stand loud and proud in their Aboriginality within their mainstream school setting
- 100% of surveyed educators felt that the program raised the positive profile of Aboriginal culture
- Requests from schools to participate in further Aboriginal cultural knowledge programs
- Four Aboriginal young people who have disengaged from school were successfully enlisted to be the support crew for the performances, and participated in school sessions
- Aboriginal community involvement was harnessed through the hosting of a family night
- Video footage across the four days was captured to produce a documentary of the visit to the Gannawarra



Australian Government



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Supported by Gannawarra Shire Flood Recovery Funding through the Gannawarra Community Resilience Committee

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Student Feedback:

- It was really good. It was interactive and it made everybody feel very happy. It was a good atmosphere.
- It was very informative what they told us about the plants and native local environment. Overall, it was a good experience in general to learn more about indigenous culture.
- I really liked how we danced and did some learning sitting down together, there was a good balance.
- There was no judgement and everyone was able to join in and have fun, without feeling any pressure. Safe space.

Educator Feedback:

- It was excellent, very engaging and the activities were inclusive so everyone could participate.
- What a terrific opportunity for our students. It would be valuable to have more Aboriginal cultural sessions provided directly into our classrooms.

Question: What did you like most about the Indigenous Outreach Project, Michael Long Story event?

- Interactable and relatable.
- The participation and involvement the students were able to experience with the instructors.
- I loved the positive message about 'self'. Be proud, don't worry what your mates say, no shame and respect!
- Everything was relevant to our students. To see our young people up there dancing, smiling, laughing and having fun was amazing. I was shocked that 99% of them got up and danced. This certainly should be a regular in our schools. Amazing! Inspiring! Educational! Message to teenagers was highly relatable and relevant. I spent the whole time smiling. I am so proud of our young people for giving it a go and the respectful way they conducted themselves.
- Thought it was all wonderful.

