



# Dolls and Yarning

Yamaji dolls from  
Geraldton and Northampton



**Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre (GRCEC)** is a not-for-profit association based in Geraldton. GRCEC provides quality services in children's services, education, career development, counselling and individual and family support.

**The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' (DEEWR)** through **Parental and Community Engagement (PaCE)** program funded *The Dolls & Yarning* project. DEEWR's PaCE Program is targeted to parents and caregivers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school aged children.

### **DEEWR PaCE Program objectives**

**Enhance** the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to engage with schools and education providers to support improved educational outcomes for their children

**Build** strong leadership that supports high expectations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' educational outcomes

**Support** the establishment, implementation and/or ongoing progress of community-school partnership agreements

**Support and reinforce** children's learning at home.

# Dolls and Yarning



Yamaji dolls from  
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28 September - 5 November 2012  
Western Australian Museum Geraldton

# Discussion Threads

Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal ways of learning passed on through the importance of play.

"I used to make dolls out of cool drink bottles. I used a little towel or clothes as the blanket to wrap it. My children played with dolls."

"I played hopscotch and was really good at balancing"

(When making the doll) "I don't know who it is yet. It makes you think, what's it going to represent and who."

"You can learn how to be a mum from dolls."

"There were no Aboriginal dolls when I was little."

"I had an ALF doll when I was little. Mum sewed my name on it."

"We played schools, my sister was always teacher, she even had recess and she gave us homework. She works as an AIEO now."

"We used to play – ABC boy/girl/smoke/town/country. It was timed and you couldn't have the same letter. It was great for learning to work under pressure, learning geography, working in groups with others. We still play it sometimes with our kids"

"I'd get a doll at Christmas as a special treat"

"My parents couldn't afford to buy too much, too many toys but I used to use bottle tops to count, that was our counters mum and dad told us how to use them for counting numbers."

*(quotes from workshop participants)*

"The stories kind of get breathed into these little dolls."



# Foreword



## **Jenny Allen**

Director  
Geraldton Regional  
Community Education  
Centre

Fond memories of making dolls, an article about doll making by Noongar women and a visit to the Yarns of the Heart Exhibition at the Western Australian Museum provided the inspiration for this project. Just as the unique and fascinating collection of dolls created by women from the Southern Wheatbelt captured the imagination, so too has this project captivated all of us.

The Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre (GRCEC) has been privileged to coordinate this collaborative, community arts project that reflects the strong culture and identity of Aboriginal people in Geraldton and Northampton. The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations provided funding and ongoing support to enable the idea to become a reality. The artist facilitator not only shared her knowledge and skills to help create the stunning collection of dolls, but also generated conversations to enable important stories to be shared and retold. The enthusiasm and expertise of the Western Australian Museum -Geraldton culminated in an outstanding exhibition, open to schools and the wider community.

At workshops, at schools and at community events and celebrations grandmothers, mothers, teenage daughters and children created unique and enchanting dolls and yarned about childhood, life and family and community experiences. Aboriginal ways of teaching and learning were explored and celebrated. The doll makers have demonstrated the value of play and of school, family and community sharing responsibility for children's learning.

I would like to sincerely thank all those who have participated in this inspiring project, especially those who have so willingly shared their dolls and their stories. You leave a legacy for Aboriginal children today and into the future. The whole community can benefit from the gifts you have given us.

# The Project Facilitators



**Rosemaree Magro**  
Manager  
PaCE projects  
GRCEC

From the beginning this project decided it was broader than its brief and became as special as the beautiful dolls that grew from it. Originally eight doll making workshops were planned with the same group of fifteen parents over a period of five months.

As with all best laid plans something different, something better came to be. Seventeen workshops were run with a variety of participants in numerous small groups from Geraldton and Northampton. Their involvement is a testament to the PaCE aim of encouraging parental ownership of projects that empower them to support their children's education.

These wonderful little dolls took on personalities as soon as they were stuffed and clothes or faces added. It wasn't unusual for group members to refer to their doll by name. It was fascinating to witness these inanimate objects come to life and play an active part in the yarning, adding richness to the conversations and emerging stories. Discussion threads were wrapped around the topic of education and of course the yarning always started with family, until family and education yarns became inseparable and closely stitched together.

I felt very privileged that participants generously allowed me to capture and share some of their personal and moving stories they told through yarning.



**Bianca McNeair**  
Aboriginal Artist from  
Malgana country,  
Shark Bay

As Artist Facilitator for the *Dolls and Yarning* project I have thoroughly enjoyed the process of creating Aboriginal dolls, by Aboriginal people, to inspire Aboriginal children. I believe the *Dolls and Yarning* project has made a positive contribution to the relationships between parents and schools, therefore building a greater understanding of Aboriginal culture in the community.

The role of the Aboriginal woman is a very important part of our community as a whole. Each doll has been created individually expressing the different people and experiences that encourage and strengthen our lives.

The workshops created an environment that encouraged sharing stories of inspiration, hardship and courage. The journeys of ourselves and our families were shared around the table with respect and pride, all the while breathing life and love into the dolls being crafted by experienced nurturing hands.

the  
Yarning



The stories emerge

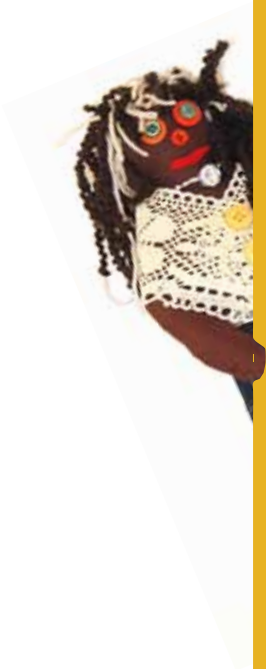
# The Workshops











# Dolls

A selection of Yamaji dolls  
with accompanying stories  
told by their creators



*Minnie*  
**Delores Nutter**

My doll is made in memory of my grandmother Minnie and my daughter Minnie.

I'm a Nanda Wajarri woman.



*Shelley*  
**Justine Adams**

While making this doll I was inspired by my sister Shelley, who has passed away. Shelley, our angel.

*(Sally and Shelley are grandmother and granddaughter. Both are no longer with us in body but they are always with us in spirit. Reggie and Justine - sisters)*

## *Colourful Girl*

**Bianca McNeair**

*Colourful Girl* is made up of lots of colours but her blackness holds her together.



## *Sally*

**Reggie Richardson**

Sally is my nan and had a huge influence on my life. I can say I share her passion for nice clothes and accessories.

I also felt it was necessary to acknowledge the seventeen children she gave birth to. Respect was something she instilled in me at a very young age.

# *Helen Bellottie*

**Bianca McNear**

When my mum Helen was in year 7 at Shark Bay Primary School she received a scholarship to attend Stella Maris College in Geraldton.

She had no shoes and only one school dress. She would get into trouble for swimming in her school dress on her way home from school.





*Rhiannon*  
**Denielle Riley**

My doll is a reflection of my eldest daughter Rhiannon who is 15 years old. We are planning a trip to Bali, that is why my doll is wearing a dress that is cool but comfortable with a dash of style.

I complemented her dress code with a necklace, belt and headband. My daughter enjoys being creative with her outfits. I chose to have the doll's hair natural as possible, because Rhiannon has beautiful hair without additives. The shoes are based on the shuffles Rhiannon prefers to wear in today's style.

The colours I have used give me a sense of balance.

## *Kardyj - sit up and listen*

**Natalie Mogridge**

*(with input from Wayne Bonney)*

My Pop used to say “Kardyj” in a firm voice and we used to listen to him. That’s how you were taught respect.

My Pop taught language at St Joseph’s school in Moora and took the kids out into the bush to teach them.

**Diane Mippy** *tiny Kardyj doll*









## *Hoochie Mama* Carol Riley

*Hoochie Mama* is remembering a teenage girl and the way she once dressed ten years ago.

Today she has two children, is currently employed and her dress sense has completely changed.



## *Mimi* Rachel Mongoo

I got the name Mimi off my aunty.

## *Jacquelicious* **Lee-Anne Taylor**

A young, strong, black, deadly Yamaji woman who is making a positive change for her Aboriginal people in the Midwest and Gascoyne regions of Western Australia.

Jacquie, my daughter, is committed to the work she does with Early Years Education for both mother and children, her involvement in NAIDOC events, Aboriginal committees and as a City of Greater Geraldton representative.

Growing up a shy girl, to where she is now, makes me proud as a mother. Ten years ago I was her role model; today she is a role model to me and many of her family and friends.





*Shelicka*  
**Joanne Chubby**

This doll is called *Shelicka* after my granddaughter because she likes dolls. She has eight or nine dolls.

When I was young I only got a doll at Christmas time.



*Kavita (Milly) Pepper*  
**Beverly Drage**

My doll is of my daughter Kavita (Milly) Pepper who is an inspiration in my life. She is in her Stateside basketball uniform.

Milly plays basketball, softball, netball, soccer and any other challenging sport.



*Bubba*  
**Joanne Chubby**

This doll is called *Bubba* after my niece because she had big eyes and was cute when she was little.



*Hippy Fellow*  
**Kelly Ashwin**

This doll is the hippy fellow from *Banana Joe*. I love that movie.

*Chace*  
**Rachel Mongoo**

I named my doll *Chace* and dressed him in *Cars* clothes because my son Chace likes the cartoon *Cars*.



*Little One*  
**Sherylee Haynes**

I called this doll *Little One* after my daughter as she was small when she was born, she's 26 years old now.

She was a very organised young person, very caring and warm. She lives and works in Broome now. I don't get to see her often so this doll is something to remind me of her.

## *Sister Karlene* Rachel Mongoo and Karlene Mongoo

I named the doll *Sister Karlene* because Karlene sewed the doll and I dressed her.



## *Kasey* Nicole Donaldson

I've made my son, Kasey. He's turning 9. He has big brown eyes and likes to play football. He started off with Oz kick and then he got into Rovers. He loves it and every Sunday he is up and ready to go early. He got chosen to be captain last week. He said, "I can't wait 'til Friday – it's news day I can tell them I got chosen for captain."

He loves doing news at school; he's got a good imagination when he starts telling his little stories. He loves counting and maths and he always asks me different sums. They did something on astronomy at school, he liked that.





## *Yamaji Dancing Man*

**Melissa Drage**

*This doll was originally called Mario, then he became a Yamaji Dancing Man, because I love my culture and am proud to be Aboriginal.*



**Diane Mippy**  
tiny Kardyj doll

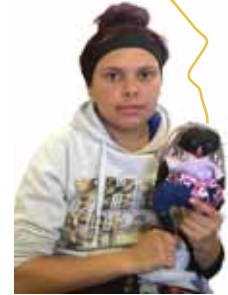
# Warlugurra Walgarmanyulu

(Aboriginal Girls Working Together - Geraldton Senior College)



My doll's name is *Shaeliegh*, after my niece.  
She likes to wear necklaces and she's very pretty.

*Megan Jones*



*Tegan Dalgety*

I named my doll *Lashante* after my little  
niece because the doll remind me of her.

*Sophie Narrier*

Ricki is my uncle and this is how he dresses.  
He doesn't have much hair.

*Tahlia Mourambine*



I made the doll, *Emily* because it  
reminds me of my little sister and my  
little sister is really shy and doesn't talk much.

*Crystal Indich*



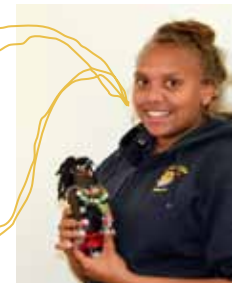
*Verna Malay*

Shelia Mandoo and  
Brittany Flanagan  
also created dolls for the  
*Dolls and Yarning* project  
under the guidance of  
Geraldton Senior College  
Student Coordinator  
Carol Puskiec (*right*)  
and project artist,  
Bianca McNear.



My doll's name is *Heather*. She  
reminds me of my aunty, her  
name is Heather Mourambine.

*Narana Walsh*



# workshop participants



Ashlee Adams  
Brooke Adams  
Justine Adams  
Melissah Adams  
Kelly Ashwin  
Denise Beard  
Carrol Bedson  
Narelle Capewell  
Joanne Chubby  
Barb Dalgety  
Makeesha Dalgety  
Nicole Donaldson  
Beverley Drage  
Colleen Drage  
Melissa Drage  
Anita Greenaway  
Sherylee Haynes  
Margaret Jones

Kirrilly Lindberg  
Samantha Lovell  
Mavis McGibbon (Ryder)  
Bianca McNeair (project artist)  
Natalie Mogridge  
Karlene Mongoo  
Rachel Mongoo  
Delores Nutter  
Chantelle Rafferty  
Reggie Richardson  
Carol Riley  
Denielle Riley  
Carmel Ryan  
Tash Ryan  
Lee-Anne Taylor  
Tahina Todd





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Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre would like to acknowledge the Noongar women doll makers from the Southern Wheatbelt for their inspiration and support. The generous way they shared their experience with the Yamaji women in Geraldton and Northampton has left a lasting legacy. Thank you.

back cover: Tiny Kardyj doll by Diane Mippy





# ~Dolls and Yarning

*Dolls and Yarning* is an exhibition showcasing the dolls created by Yamaji parents and young people in Geraldton and Northampton, Western Australia.

The Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre received funding from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations through Parental and Community Engagement (PaCE) program to run a series of workshops in Geraldton and Northampton. In partnership with the Western Australian Museum Geraldton the *Dolls and Yarning* exhibition presents to the public the dolls produced during the workshops along with the stories and yarns of the doll makers.

The story threads that make up *Dolls and Yarning* continue to gather as more groups begin to make dolls as a way of telling their own stories and yarns....

