

Case Study : 'Share Africa' Project

A project coordinated by Ballarat RADO Verity Higgins in 2009 –10 for some of Ballarat's 'new arrivals' - African women



'Cultural diversity widens the range of options open to everyone (...) as a means of access to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence.'

Article 3 of the Universal Declaration on Cultural diversity.



Nyanchar Deng
'This makes me really happy because it can give me work, and people can enjoy my culture.'

The project

In 2009 a group of Sudanese women began training to develop a 1 ½ hr-2hr Cultural Awareness Workshop Package about African Culture suitable for delivery in schools and for community groups.

As well as developing content and resources they are developing skills in communication, promotion, taking bookings, delivery and evaluation.

The participants will have the opportunity to refine the package through a series of pilot workshops.

Aims

- To promote acceptance and understanding of different cultures amongst the Ballarat & District Community, and in particular school children
- To pass on useful skills to the participants
- To provide the participants with opportunities to actively participate in community life
- To provide the participants with a small business opportunity

Background

This project idea came from one of the women, Nyanchar Deng, who wanted a way to share her culture in schools. Effie Litras, the ESL & Multicultural Project Officer from Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, was successful in receiving a small grant from Vichealth for this project. Ballarat RADO Verity Higgins, is coordinating the project which is auspiced by the City of Ballarat

Training

The training began in mid 2009 and is being delivered once a week through term times by Shiree Pilkinton from the Ballarat East Community Learning Place.

Pilot Workshops

Two pilot workshops for schools have been organised by Effie Litras and will be delivered in two small schools on the outskirts of Ballarat in March 2010 during Cultural Diversity Week.

Other Outcomes

The women have already delivered a successful food stall at the Eureka Festival in December 09 and are also running one for the launch of Cultural Diversity Week '10 together with teaching cous-cous making at the Snake Valley Community Hall.

Project Partners

DEECD

RAV

City of Ballarat

Ballarat East Community Learning Centre

The Hole Big Yarn engaged diverse areas of the community and created an opportunity for development of new skills and networks across the region

Building Partnerships:

The Hole Big Yarn connected individual artists from across the south west region by involving them in an opportunity to make work for this project. This created a sense of connection to a wider networks and opportunities for them to work in ways they had not considered before. Artists from Portland, Hamilton, Warrnambool and Port Fairy all made pieces for the project. The project also worked closely with groups and organisations across the region creating real networking and links for future relationships.

Supporting Indigenous Communities:

The Hole Big Yarn invited several different and targeted groups to contribute to the project as a way of networking people from diverse groups and communities. As a result the project touched many and varied groups with different skills bases and those communities now have a new ideas and networks to work from for other projects into the future. Participating groups included: Western Plains Spinners & Weavers, Framlingham Aboriginal community, Moyneyana House elderly citizens and Port Fairy Craft Group.

Social inclusion:

An aim of the project was to promote contemporary art in a way that included many people with different skills and knowledge. Using a craft medium with historical 'usefulness and practicality', promoted participation from those who could share their knowledge and skilfully create unusual items for unusual settings. The medium of knitting and crochet also opened up participation for those wanting to learn or those not skilled but willing to try. The concept of the project made it possible for many people to create, even if they professed a lack of skill in the area.

'The Hole Big Yarn linked me with other artists in the region and gave me a unique experience of a community project. I was challenged to push my skills to a new level and working with the community of Panmure created a dialogue of knowledge and skills exchange. This project has been powerful in its impact, right across the community.'

Trevor Smith, artist Portland

*'The Aboriginal women and children from Framlingham were inspired and intrigued by the project's concept. The usual barriers to access were not applicable and diversity in relation to the age, experience, cultural backgrounds and socio-economic status of participants enhanced the richness of the outcomes for the community. Projects like *The Hole Big Yarn* are important for building social connection and skills development between women from diverse population groups.'*

Rochelle Hine, Women's Health Resource Worker, South West Health

The Hole Big Yarn gave our residents the opportunity to use common and practical skills acquired over a lifetime and therefore the creative confidence to broaden their community involvement in a diverse project such as this. Age was not a barrier; in fact their years of knowledge were a definite advantage in this project.

Oriel Glennen, Moyneyana House, Port Fairy