

Case study

Journeys – Seisia Culture Love 2014

Details

What:

The Seisia Culture Love arts and culture school holiday program was hosted by the Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council (NPARC) through the Seisia Indigenous Knowledge Centre (IKC) from the 7 to 11 April 2014. This Culture Love event was held in conjunction with Youth Week activities.

Through elders' stories, children and young people were immersed in visual and media arts activities to celebrate and retell stories of the journey of people from Saibai Island and the establishment of the community at Seisia.

Traditional practices of carving, weaving, dancing, drumming, singing and cooking culminated in an evening exhibition and spectacular dance performances. Local artists furthered their art practice and local services developed their capacity to deliver a diverse program of arts and cultural activities.

“It was like a big celebration and we could feel the spirit of ancestors when the story has been told through arts, dancing and storytelling.”

When:

April 2014

Where:

Seisia Community, Northern Peninsula Area, Cape York, Far North Queensland.



Many attendees tried traditional weaving for the first time.

Key stats:

- 18 activities were held over the week.
- 180 people participated in arts and cultural activities.
- Overall 400 people attended activities or events which were part of this project.

Arts Queensland contribution:

\$16,500 – Projects and Programs Fund

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Links:

<http://seisia.ikc.org.au/culture-love-photos/>

<http://seisia.ikc.org.au/culture-love-newsletter-story/>

Outcomes

- Community ideas came to fruition through collaboration, cooperation, love and unity as the Northern Peninsula Area (NPA) came culturally alive with 180 children and young people participating in activities, 50 volunteers supporting the events and 400 people attending from across the NPA for the evening celebration. The celebration exhibited created artworks, historical photos and traditional cooking methods and weaving, and included dancing, drumming and hula performances.
- A new generation of arts leaders learnt more about project and event management, with this event assisting to build a network of local service providers and develop the capacity to run similar events in the future. Seven council staff and two SLQ officers worked alongside six local services (Seisia Enterprises, Men's Shed, One Way Solutions, My Pathway, Surum Services and Bamaga Enterprises). Two local artists were employed and mentored by a visiting professional arts worker, developing their skills in delivering workshops for children.
- New technologies were embraced through this project, with children working with iPads, e-books and iMovie from the IKC to record and produce interviews with Elders about their journey from Saibai to Seisia. These interviews will form part of the IKC collection recognising and acknowledging Indigenous knowledge experts.



The T-shirt design competition was very popular with participants, with the final design reflecting the event theme, the historical story of the movement from Saibai to Seisia.

Learnings and reflections

The organisers reflected that a highlight of the event was seeing people of all ages working and playing together, with the opportunity for the community Elders to teach people and share skills and tell stories that had not been told before.

“It brings unity and an opportunity for all age groups to learn and build respect and for the community to carry culture onwards to the future generations”.

The program's theme focused on historical stories of migration and 'journeys' from Saibai Island in the Torres Strait to Seisia in the Northern Peninsula.

Organisers faced some challenges with the weather and the Youth Week activities being held concurrently, which pulled focus at times from the Culture Love program. These considerations together with the feedback gathered from over 55 attendees will help shape future events.

At the opening ceremony and closing celebration it was intended to use Skype technology to live stream between Seisia and Saibai. This had never been done before, and was a new way to connect and bring together these communities. Unfortunately bad weather prevented this from working, however the seed has been planted and a group of interested people are looking to pursue this method to communicate in the future with the assistance of the IKC.

The stories being told stirred up emotions for some participants, however, attendees felt it reignited interest in maintaining, recognising and strengthening culture.

“Every day was a learning experience – things you'd forgotten about traditional practices were experienced again – didn't realise how much we remembered”

“We thought kids would be the main benefactors of this week, and didn't expect the adults to also benefit as much as they did”.