

Case study

The Rainbow Community Serpent



Details

What:

The Rainbow Community Serpent is a public art installation located in the Indigenous Garden at Mount Morgan Central School.

The 10 metre long concrete sculpture, known as “*Bardo*”, was the concept of artist Kirilly Swain and is representative of the local Indigenous carpet snake totem. The sculpture also emphasises the region’s diversity in a broad sense, including its many cultures, backgrounds and life experiences.

The construction of the Rainbow Community Serpent was a collaborative process involving the school, Parents and Citizens Association, local business owners, community members and fellow artist Alicia Rush.

Rolling working bees over four months helped develop the sculpture’s frame as well as prepare the sculpture ready for the final design application.

Elements from various designs submitted to a competition were used to decorate the sculpture. Classes of 2015, volunteers, teachers, community members and visitors also placed their handprints along *Bardo*’s body.

Local native plants used in Indigenous everyday life were added to the space surrounding *Bardo*.

The sculpture has drawn attention to, and created discussion about the Indigenous Garden and has increased understanding of Indigenous cultures among students and locals.



Development of *Bardo*. Image courtesy Kirra Swain

When:

2015

Where:

Mount Morgan

Key stats:

- 250 participants
- 5 individual artists in professional or career development activities
- 25 volunteers

Financial contribution:

\$2892 – Regional Arts Development Fund

The Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) is a partnership between the Queensland Government and Rockhampton Regional Council.

Outcomes

- The Rainbow Community Serpent has provided a visual reminder of inclusion and reconciliation in the community. Students from the school have developed a sense of ownership of the work.
- Development of the sculpture brought many isolated people in the community together. This has resulted in the development of a support network in the community.
- Kirilly developed her professional network and skills in community consultation and workshop facilitation.
- Kirilly has since received two expressions of interest for similar sculpture projects.
- The sculpture is located on the [TMC Mount Morgan Guided Tours](#). This will attract attention and discussion from visitors to the area.

Participant feedback

- *“He has turned out great, the kids are really excited about him.” Tammy Alden*
- *“He has been fun working on him, am going to miss being so hands on.” Debbie Dawes, Artist*
- *“Love him, just love him, he is awesome” Donna Anderson*



Bardo: The Rainbow Community Serpent. Image courtesy Kirra Swain

Learnings and reflections

Collaboration and communication were key to the success of this project, as identified by Kirilly:

The workshops worked exceptionally well, with just the right amount of people. Advertising for them was done via printed signs placed at local noticeboards, an article in the The Argus and social media posts.

However though word was out there it still came as a surprise to some when a 10 metre snake suddenly appeared in the front garden of the school,. I encouraged further collaboration with the valued assistance of fellow artists and a teacher and liaison officer.

Kirilly had the following tip for others working on similar projects:

My biggest tip would be that in a small town, there is not such thing as enough collaboration... use every method possible to get the word out.

Contact for further information

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