The Story of Buninyong: Research Report

Margaret Zeegers
The Story of Buninyong: Research Report

Margaret Zeegers
Dr Margaret Zeegers is Associate Professor in the School of Education and Arts at the University of Ballarat. Majoring in History in her Bachelor of Arts degree, she taught Australian History and English and English Literature in Victorian state secondary schools before turning to primary teaching and teacher education in her graduate and postgraduate work. She coordinates the English and Literacy courses in the Bachelor Education (P-10) and supervises a number of PhD students at the University of Ballarat. She has written and researched extensively on various topics in Education, Literacy and History.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD ..................................................................................................................i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ...............................................................................................iii
1. INTRODUCTION ...........................................................................................................1
2. BACKGROUND .............................................................................................................6
3. SCAFFOLDING THE LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM ...........................................15
4. SCAFFOLDING THE LEARNING IN THE LANDSCAPE ...........................................21
5. GETTING THE PRODUCTION TOGETHER .............................................................25
6. CHILDREN’S RESPONSES TO THE PROJECT ......................................................27
7. CONCLUSION ............................................................................................................34
8. REFERENCES .............................................................................................................38
9. APPENDICES ............................................................................................................39
Foreword

Ted Lovett: Gunditjmara Elder

The Story of Buninyong has been an unforgettable experience for Grade 4 children at Buninyong Primary School for four years now. In this time, four cohorts of children have been a part of an extraordinary story, not just in their education, but in their understandings of bigger picture history. Working with Indigenous Australian storytellers, musicians, dancers, artists and craftsmen and women, and with their classroom teachers and parent volunteers, they have looked at ways that their school, their town, and their country is placed in relation to Indigenous and non-Indigenous events and issues. I have been pleased to be one of those who has worked with these children. I have been one of the parent volunteers, with my own grandchildren attending the school. I have told the stories; I have danced and I have sung with them; I have shown them how dance and song tell stories. I have seen their artwork as telling these stories as well. I have taken great pleasure in their achievements, and I have been proud to do the Welcome to Country for the audiences at performances.

The original idea to create a unique musical education experience based on the children’s knowledge of land and country of their school has been an inspired one. The school’s support by including it in its curriculum and making it its annual school concert stresses the educational importance of the program over past years.

The conversations with all involved in the program has always revolved around the obvious enjoyment of the children, their imagination in the stories they suggest for their production, and the development of important knowledge and understandings in these nine and ten year olds. We have seen how they have enthusiastically taken up the program for themselves, the effectiveness of the mountain walks, and the ways that they learn the symbols, stories, and characters of stories they have heard.

We have not had a complete understanding of what underpins the educational success, particularly in the ways that the children have worked through the information received. Some of that information is conflicting, and they have had to resolve the problems of this for themselves, with the help of the adults with whom they have worked.

With this research done by Margaret Zeegers, we have been able to find out about the impact on learning that the experiences of The Story of Buninyong have had on the children. We now have more to go on than our own observations, with careful and detailed research to confirm what we might have thought, but could not actually prove, about the program’s educational success. Margaret Zeegers’ research has provided insights to the children and other participants’ experiences in the program that have deepened our own understandings of what we ourselves have been doing. We have learned, for one thing, that each child has made it their own.
This study shows that the program adds something very special to the curriculum offered at Buninyong Primary School, for it shows how impressive the school’s program is in promoting rich learning experiences of Australia’s history that goes beyond the European view of it. Audiences at the production respond enthusiastically to what they see and hear, as they themselves are given the opportunity to learn about a larger view of history, and with this research, we will be able to communicate the unique aspects of learning that underpin the success we have seen.

Ted Lovett
November, 2011
Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of the people involved in The Story of Buninyong and its associated activities. I am particularly grateful to the children of Buninyong Primary School who have so generously responded to requests for interviews in which they have freely given their evaluations of their experiences of the program in which they have participated. The staff who have worked on the program have been similarly generous with their time and expertise, as have the parents who have volunteered their time and skills. The members of the local Indigenous Australian community have not only made major contributions to the program in its inception and conduct, but have been most informative in helping to engage and identify the unique knowledge that underpins the program.

I am particularly indebted for the assistance of:

Ms Sue Deans, in her capacity as Acting Principal and then as Assistant Principal of Buninyong Primary School, who has been unstinting in her advice, and in recommending, identifying and assisting in providing sources of information for consideration since the original program in 2006;

Mr Paul Wilson: classroom teacher, whose contribution to and enthusiasm for the project since 2006 has been integral to its success;

Ms Meredith Barclay, producer and director, parent and volunteer, who initiated The Story of Buninyong in 2007 for its 2008 and 2009 productions;

Ms Miranda Donald, producer and director, parent and volunteer, who worked on getting the initial Story of Buninyong produced in 2007-2008, and then took over producer and director roles in subsequent productions;

Mr Peter Lovett: Community Advisory Group member, dancer, musician, and story teller;

Mr Barry Peters: songwriter and advisor to the 2008 production;

Mr Steven Skilbeck: teacher and songwriter and musician in 2008-2011 productions;

Ms Michelle Noyce: Art teacher at the school;

Mr Peter Mould: Acting Principal of the school;

Mr Bernie Conlan: current Principal of the school;

Mr Dennis Chamberlain: Past Principal of the school;

Mr Zlatko Balazic: parent volunteer, photographer; and

Mr Brad Beales: former Honours student in the School of Education at the University of Ballarat and now a teacher at Clifton Springs Primary School, who has provided research assistant since 2006.

Others associated with the program, playing their allocated roles to contribute to the authenticity of the children’s experience, have been similarly most helpful in providing insights to the parts that they play in supporting the teachers in the program. The children
and their teachers, who graciously and generously allowed themselves to be interviewed, photographed and filmed, have provided insightful comments on their experience of the activities associated with the production of *The Story of Buninyong*. In similar vein, performances themselves, and the recordings of these, have amply demonstrated not only that the children had learned, but also what they had learned and ways in which they had learned it from their experience. At the same time, the children who made the mural that graces the entry to the school have been more helpful than they will ever know, for their carefully considered artworks have provided a rich source of material for people who have come after them to appreciate and come to an understanding of what may be learned from such an engagement with learning as theirs has been.

The University of Ballarat funded the production of the mural and the research that led to its production through its Research Grants Schemes in 2006. Since that time the school has itself generated its own funding to support its annual production of *The Story of Buninyong*. 
Introduction

The cover picture is the front of the program of the 2008 production of *The Story of Buninyong*. It encapsulates the program that Buninyong Primary School has developed in its engagement with a larger and more complex history of the school and its position in the physical and historical landscape than European versions of Australian history allow. In this report, I have explored some of that complexity. I have started with the cover of the program for the 2008 production, shown below:

The visual representation of *The Story of Buninyong* on this program cover is not only artistically satisfying; it is informative. Given the project focus of positioning the school and
all of its community in a larger history that encompasses more than a European-based one, the representation of the wedge-tail eagle flying above all else in the picture is significant. It is a representation of Bunjil, the Creator. It is central to Indigenous Australian explanations of how the world that people inhabit came about, and the children have learned from their Indigenous Australian storytellers and artists that Bunjil created the first man and woman at the place known as Lal Lal Falls, another place that the children visit as part of their studies in this field.

‘A Musical presented by Buninyong Primary School’ as printed on the cover acknowledges the importance of the whole school even as it acknowledges that it is a ‘Story prepared and presented especially by Grade Four students 2008’, and that this is scaffolded in a number of ways by a number of people, who started laying the foundations for the project in the middle of 2007. It is directed by Meredith Barclay and Miranda Donald, parents of children at the school; the music is by Barry Peters, a professional musician and composer, but with Grade Four; and Steven Skilbeck, a teacher at the school, is music director.

The colours of the landscape pick up the earthy hues of ochre reminiscent of both the volcanic soils as well as the ochre of Indigenous Australian body decoration at the same time as the green of the Australian bush rings the mountain, reinforced by the red of the children’s uniform as they are represented walking through the 1850s vestiges of European-based justice with the court house building of those times. What is more, they are represented as walking in a forward direction as they start out on their own learning journeys of ways in which they fit into this physical, social and cultural landscape that makes up their world. The image of the 2006 mural acknowledges the work of previous Grade 4 children in the original project where children worked with artists-in-residence from the Kirrit Bareet Gallery to give visual form to their understandings of Indigenous Australian perspectives on their school’s positioning in the history and physical landscapes. As Meredith Barclay, one of the initiators as well as director of this version of The Story of Buninyong says of that mural:

> Obviously Aboriginal, it’s beautiful – with the Koori colours there and it represents children’s own art, their own visual art of what they learnt. And a story in each tile, yes, and for our Story of Buninyong project. For our graphic design header or letter head and for our programs, we used one of the visual images that the children painted or created and we photo-shopped that and put it into our logo.

That logo is shown below:

![Logo](image)

The program cover itself, then, positions the project in a wider context of immediate and distant past implications of the school’s history. It is a theme picked up in the following year’s production. In 2009, a similar program cover is produced, with some variations on that of 2008. This time it is called The Story of Buninyong Part II: The Lesson. It also uses
song and dance to tell its story, this time picking up on the idea of harmony brought to discord. The program puts it in print:

In Gondwanaland, all the animals are living in harmony. Food and water are plentiful. Bunjil, the Eagle Spirit who watches over all, is happy. Soon, though, the animals start being greedy and the food and the water become scarce. Fighting begins and they do not look after the animals and the land. So Bunjil sends a creature to look after the animals and the land, one which has mystical powers. It is made up of the parts of many other creatures, and will watch over them all—Baarlijan the Platypus. Baarlijan restores the balance and the animals have all learnt an important lesson. Once again, everything is in harmony.

In this story, an important living totem is introduced in addition to Bunjil, and one of similar importance. Just as Bunjil is the creator and a significant character in the world, Baarlijan is the representative of the Ballarat Indigenous Australian community. The community involvement is part of the program, for on the back cover is a list of the sponsors, and a ‘Special Thanks’ section that lists the Community Advisory Group members indistinguishably from others involved, reinforcing the cohesion of the group and its focus on the aims of the project.

The 2010 production is *The Story of Buninyong: The Wish*, and the program is designed with the same sort of cultural knowledge and artistic flair of the previous two.
In this picture, the children are positioned realistically in realistic bushland, again moving in a forward direction, with co-inhabitants positioned symbolically within that bushland that they are themselves exploring, and the wider dimensions of the importance of positioning is once again thrown up for consideration.

In keeping with what has by now become established practice, a Community Partners section on the back cover acknowledges sponsorship and assistance from local community organisations and groups, and the Thanks section represents an integrated acknowledgement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians involved in supporting and providing advice to the production. What is more, the production poster (Appendix 1) has a Starring section which includes The Wathaurong Tribe.

The 2011 production has as its focus the land itself, with the songs reflecting that year’s students’ responses to their experience, scaffolded, as in other years, by teachers, artists-in-residence, parents and other volunteers in the production. The title is The Story of Buninyong: Then, Now and Tomorrow. The program includes several pages of children’s own expressions of hope, mostly in relation to the environment and its preservation, exemplified by one child’s words: ‘To help the earth we could preserve the ancestors’ land. The land is everything’. Another child has a more personal view: ‘In the future I would like to be a brain surgeon’, obviously taking a long term personal view of his own life. It stands out from the others because of this, but it does underscore the point about the children taking ownership of the program in very personal ways of developing understandings.

The program also includes its own graphic representation of the themes of the Story:

[Image: From the cover of the 2011 program]

It has its own focus, with both mountains and the plains on which they sit represented, along with a border reminiscent of the sort of art work that previous groups of children have done with the Indigenous Australian artists with whom they have worked. This program acknowledges the work of artist Billy Blackall, who was also instrumental in the 2006 mural production project. The painting itself has been hung in the open area outside the Grade 4 classrooms.

Miranda Donald outlines the basis the children’s work on The Story of Buninyong:

...The Grade 4 teachers do an Indigenous unit for local history, so the children read about the local history and look at murals and do research and do presentations about local history. This project takes it one step further in that the
children have three workshop days. Two of those are off site where they go to—well one is up to the Mount Buninyong from the school—taking that walk up to the Mount which takes about two hours, not very long. And on the way there are six or 8 artists’ stops where they get to stop and learn about something to do with the history of the culture of the area. And another one is that they have gone to Mt Elephant, the second workshop day, and have an interaction with the Derrinallum School there, and also climb Mt Elephant and looked at the connection between Mt Elephant and Mt Buninyong. There’s a story about the Indigenous connection there, so they’ve learnt all about that and then they also have a third workshop day which is at the school, where guest artists come in, Aboriginal artists and non-Aboriginal depending on who we get at the time, and they might do dancing, or singing, or drawing, or painting, and song writing, writing stories... all this sort of stuff can happen in that last workshop day. And they also have an Indigenous barbecue which can involve anything from kangaroo and fish, cooking fish on the barbecue and then they get to taste and do and immerse themselves in the local history unit. At the same time the teachers are doing their local history unit in class, so they’ve just got this added sort of tactile experience. And then we thought, ‘Well, let’s use all of what the kids have learnt and let them write their own musical, their own story, and let’s put it on’. So that’s what we’ve done, and so each year it can change, the sort of their focus, because the kids might be really drawn to the animals or they might be drawn to the mountains, or trees, so the story gets written, with my assistance and others’, you know, professional song writers. We sort of guide the children so that each year it’s been a 50-minute original musical with up to 8 or 9 songs.

The summary that she provides presents a deceptively simple account of the project, as the following suggests.
2. Background

The Story of Buninyong project is a unique outcome of Buninyong Primary School’s decision to embed Indigenous Australian perspectives on the Australian experience in its curriculum and to make a public statement on this through its annual school concert. The 2006 public statement has taken the form of a mural produced by the children involved in an artists-in-residence program, and subsequent years has seen this take the form of the annual school concert. A picture of that mural is given below:

![The mural at the entrance to the school](image)

Just as the production of the mural was in 2006, The Story of Buninyong production has been based on positioning the school and its population in the historical, physical and cultural landscape in which it operates (Zeegers, 2011b). A unique production has been produced for each of the years since 2008, for as Meredith Barclay, who, with Miranda Donald, has been a major driving force behind the initiative, and who was the initial producer and director of the performance, says:

The vision was that we wanted to invite the children on the journey to create this musical. That’s probably the hardest way to do it because normally if you do a musical in the school you decide, ‘Well we’ll do Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat and there’s a script and there’s a song and we’ll just copy it’, whereas we decided to create it. So that was the challenge. We decided, well, we needed to immerse the children in the local environment.

In doing so, Buninyong Primary school has anticipated the proposed Australian National History Curriculum (Australian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority, 2009) by several years. That new National History Curriculum, to be introduced by 2014, specifically refers to embedding Indigenous Australian perspectives in what is taught and learned, and how it is taught and learned, in Australian primary and secondary schools: ‘Students will understand that Australia’s past pre-dates British colonisation and can recognise and value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander influences on our present day society’ (Australian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority, 2009, p. 8). A point of concern among educators in relation to this is that this is not to be done until more senior years of schooling,
perhaps by Year 10. Buninyong Primary School has introduced this feature in Grade 4. It has done more than the National History Curriculum suggest, though, as the literature that has been generated as a result of debates about that curriculum indicate. Weuffen (2011) has reviewed the literature on these debates, based largely on concerns of Eurocentric focuses which marginalise the very Indigenous Australian perspectives that this new curriculum is to incorporate. That literature canvasses issues such as positions from which the curriculum has been written, the choices of language within the curriculum, and concepts of shared histories in the face of dominant European curriculum overshadowing Indigenous Australian perspectives. The school’s approach has in many ways anticipated this sort of concern in approaches to ways in which to address Indigenous Australian perspectives on curriculum, and at relatively early stages of children’s engagement with Australian History.

Those involved in guiding the project have taken the unique step of basing children’s activities in artists-in-residence programs, a practice where children’s critical engagement with what they develop with the artist-in-residence as non print-based children’s literature texts enable them to explore the ramifications of the Indigenous Australian history connections of every Australian. The project acknowledges that the school is built on traditional custodians’ land, and children engage this basic principle as part of their activities to expand the dimensions of their understandings of this aspect of their history. This includes engagement with such books as Papunya School Book of Country and History by Anangu staff and students at Papunya School (2001), Heiss’ (2006) Who Am I?: The Diary of Mary Talence, Malbunka’s (2003) When I Was Little, Like You, Torres and Williams’ (u.d.) The Story of Crow: A Nyul Nyul Story and Trezise’s (1997) Land of the Dingo People (1997). This sort of books tells a bigger story than those written by non-Indigenous Australians, and provide more than European perspectives for the children to consider.

Integral to the project is children working with Indigenous Australian artists, storytellers and craftsmen, for this adds a dimension of what Paul Wilson, a teacher at the school who has been heavily involved with the program since 2006, calls authenticity. Asked why the children have been involved in this way, rather than relying on the books, films, and Internet for information, he says:

We focus on how they communicate through story and how they communicate through symbols and just celebrate their culture and their artistic expression, I guess, and then we launch into the story of Buninyong. [We use] some of those story books. Jake Jagumari and the Bird Stick. I use that too as a story. It’s a wonderful story you know about being taken away, the role of government back then and how he had to darken his skin and so on. The thing is you sort of really develop concepts with kids to actually think about the Stolen Generations. Last year I had Uncle Murray Harrison and he spoke to me at length about how he was taken away as child and then I relayed that story on to the children. Murray was taken when he was about ten, which is the age of these Grade 4 children and they’re 10, and how would you like to be taken away in the middle of the night, be locked in a cell in Melbourne in a boys’ institution in the middle of the night and you don’t know why you’ve been taken away? And these things happened.
But it’s still a yardstick for the kids who are going to get that. You know, other kids aren’t going to get that. They’re going to touch on it in a superficial way.

Those working in the project make an important distinction between information and knowledge, as far as the children are concerned. It is a universal principle, not culturally bound, that information is facts, data, figures, and so on. Knowledge is when this information is filtered through one’s own experience to become meaningful in some way. What is more, this filtering of information to become knowledge occurs as a process of learning, where connections are made between existing knowledge and new knowledge, worked into a more complete personal body of knowledge. Information derived from books constitutes part of that, and information from personal engagement is another source.

Traditional non-Indigenous Australian classroom focus on various genres of information sources is enlarged with a traditional Indigenous Australian focus on genres of narratives conveyed in music, song, dance and visual representations of information. The adults involved in the project have combined the two to produce a seamless engagement with the learning that the children take up. Taking up the concept that making connections constitutes learning, teachers and artists work with the children on that making of connections. Shaun O’Loughlin, having worked on the project for two years and now having taken over the major organisational roles involved, says:

That’s sort of, I suppose, what creates the story in itself because what the kids have taken from their walks, of their work on the walks, is then transferred back into actually making The Story of Buninyong for this year. So we’ve looked at what we learned from those walks and tried to tie that in to what we’re going to be done in the performance. That’s where they get the connections, because it’s something that they’ve experienced.

There is a further dimension to this as well. There is not just the knowledge that is generated; there are also values that are engaged. There is that respect for culturally valued and valuable ways of knowing and being. Paul Wilson comments on this:

...One of speakers and Paul just hit home that there was a whole list on respect, especially with the boys and we think that’s quite fundamental, especially the way society has evolved today and not all parents are together and it’s really good and especially for those troubled boys. He is saying that we must have respect for family, you must have respect for elders, you must have respect for Mum and Dad and I think that it’s those values, those traditional values that we grew up with that are no longer there, however the Indigenous people, the traditional Indigenous people, still believe in that, still promote that, and so do we. We’re on the same page. Nothing’s different, nothing’s different, it’s just how do you do it in the school environment. We do it every day, however we try to bring it out from a different perspective.

That perspective includes the importance of authenticity, something which Paul Wilson suggests is not so easily established: ‘I think if you’ve got someone there telling you and
telling you a real story about something about a person in your family that experienced these things, you engage a lot more, for sure’. It is an issue that Miranda Donald has also taken up in having children engage with Indigenous Australian artists:

Yes, there’s a lot of that. For example, the first year the girls did an authentic dance and it had to only be girls and they were trained by the Aboriginal dancers: ‘Look this is what we do and this is why we do it’ and there certainly is that sense of authenticity that we get from the Aboriginal leaders to let us know. Can girls do this? Can boys do that? How do we do it? Which animals go first? Which one is the leader? All that sort of stuff.

Sue Deans, Assistant Principal at Buninyong Primary School, succinctly describes the vision that underpins The Story of Buninyong as ‘a community building initiative, aiming to collaboratively build understanding of the place where we live, its past, present and future’. In her presentation for the successful nomination of the school’s program for the 2008 Department of Education and Early Childhood Development’s Victorian Education Excellence Awards, she stresses the importance of this focus, saying, ‘We can’t do the job that we have to do without having everybody on board to support it’.

The Story of Buninyong had its fourth birthday in 2011, this unique project having developed into a prominent feature of part the Grade 4 local history unit. In each of its four years, the project has culminated in the performance of an original school musical as its school concert. In 2008, Sue Deans approached me to conduct systematic research on the project, which has involved interviews with the Grade 4 children, their teachers, and their guides and advisors in the program. I was at the same time given unrestricted access to archived material in the form of minutes of steering committee meetings, photographs, filmed performances, and any other relevant documentation of the processes involved in the production of the public performance of The Story of Buninyong. I obtained further data in the form of transcripts of interviews I conducted with a number of people involved in the project, not least of whom are the children who have been involved in various iterations of The Story of Buninyong.

The project has grown out of a 2006 project, initially funded by the University of Ballarat, which established an Indigenous Australian artists-in-residence program to foreground its Indigenous Australian history. The principal at the time, Dennis Chamberlain, wanted not just a one-off experience for the school and the children involved, but one which would establish a basis for embedding the Indigenous Australian perspectives on the history that would inform this aspect of the school’s curriculum. The teachers and parents who have initiated and developed The Story of Buninyong project have themselves have taken up this idea. Then, as now, teachers, parents and children have worked with a Community Advisory group made up of the local Indigenous Australian elders and community representatives, volunteers and artists and craftspersons in the region. Children’s fiction and non-fiction literature texts have been used in discussions to explore issues of traditional Indigenous Australian custodianship of the land on which the school is placed and, through this, to gain Indigenous Australian perspectives on Australian society. Indigenous Australian storytellers,
artists, dancers, musicians and craft experts have helped to develop a critical appreciation of the ways in which the school has been positioned in the physical and historical landscapes (see for example Zeegers, 2011a). I say ‘pedagogical’, for *The Story of Buninyong* explores suggestive possibilities of pedagogies for effective teaching and learning underpinning all of its features upon which successful outcomes are based.

As then Acting Principal, Peter Mould, says of the 2008 production, ‘Two key parents were the driving force. They went out with enthusiasm’. These were Meredith Barclay and Miranda Donald, who set themselves quite a task not only to get the project off the ground, but to see it through to four performances in each of four years. They have contributed much to the project, especially as they had to negotiate so much culturally sensitive, pedagogically productive and practical issues. They managed to convince people that there was some worth in what they were proposing, for, as Sue Deans says, a steering committee, including parents, teachers, children, indigenous elders, Landcare and local council, worked together to create learning opportunities so the children could tell their own story in a large scale musical performance, through song, dance and visual art about the place where they live. Her opinion is that ‘This project has provided real opportunities for school and community to work together for this specific purpose’. As part of the creation of a shared vision, a logo was designed, parent newsletters produced, staff briefings were conducted, and parents’ and children’s workshops and cultural exposure field trips were undertaken. The Principal of the school in 2008, Robyn Jeffrey, was an enthusiastic supporter of the 2008 version of project, just as her predecessor, Dennis Chamberlin, was of the 2006 one. At the same time, parents Tracey Harrison and Brendan Sainsbury have maintained an active role in the project.

*The Story of Buninyong* has become a unique annual performing arts event for the school and Buninyong community; all students within the school, led by Grade 4 students, have learned more about the place where they live, presenting this to the community through narration, dancing, singing and visual art in performances at the school grounds and in the local park. As Sue Deans describes it, it has been led by the Grade 4 students, after workshops with local artists, parents, indigenous leaders, dancers, story tellers, songwriters, actors, and exploratory field trips.

Sue Deans explains further:

> The real result was community building, deepening each other’s links to one another, strengthening our respect for everything that lives around us and expanding our love for the earth on which we stand and the place where we live. Many school and community links were built.

Led by the music teacher, parents and teachers formed a band, practising together to learn and perform the new songs, with a parent on lead guitar, a teacher on drums, the local doctor on cello. The backing choir included parents, teachers and children, who rehearsed weekly. Part of this project also involved partnership with the Leigh Catchment Group to promote and involve students, teachers and families in local environmental renewal events, such as tree planting in the Mt Buninyong and catchment area. The resulting increased levels of student engagement, parent participation and community involvement have meant a more
solid positioning of the school, which had already established strong links, within its community. Sue Deans’ diagrammatic representation of the community and school connections is given at Appendix 4. The roles of the parents are not to be underestimated, for they have been the driving force of the program, even as they credit the undoubted efforts of others. Miranda Donald, one of the two parents that have taking up important production roles and who is a qualified Performing Arts teacher herself, has taken on the major roles of producer and director for the past three performances in a voluntary capacity, and she says:

We approached the principal with a friend of Meredith’s who is a song writer and said, ‘Look, we think we can do something on a volunteer basis. What do you reckon?’ and there was support there, great support, and from there it sort of grew so just now is embedded in the Grade 4 curriculum.

The project has, from its original focus in 2006, attracted a good deal of interest on international and local levels, with an article appearing in a major newspaper in China, and others in a number of other publications at home and abroad (Zeegers, 2006a, 2006b, 2010a, 2011a, 2011b). Local community radio 99.9 FM interest in the process and final performance saw Grade Four children and parents being interviewed about their learning and the opportunities that have been created from project. As well as this, the feedback to the school from parents of Grade Four children has been extremely positive, especially in relation to parents’ perceptions of the success of the project in bringing a whole range of people in the community together to celebrate and enjoy the children participating in storytelling, song, dance and high quality music.

The 2008 production saw children working closely with singer and songwriter Barry Peters, something which enabled a rich artistic content to the development of the story. A collaborative enterprise between Barry and the children meant that eight new songs included in the final performance were written. This initiative has been embedded in the school’s planning, with commitment to continue The Story of Buninyong annually. In 2009 and 2010 Gerry Skene and Steven Skilbeck took up this role of working with the children to write the music and lyrics for the production numbers. Learning experiences are embedded in the Year 4 curriculum and in the school assembly and newsletter schedules.

Any audience member of any of the productions over the last three years is immediately struck by the enthusiasm and the dedication of all involved. This is not just the parents of the children who perform, or the teachers involved, or the children themselves; it is the whole school and its wider community. Meredith Barclay takes up this point, referring to Indigenous Australian community leaders like Ted Lovett, whose grandchildren attend the school, playing important advisory and practical roles in the project:
We spent a lot of time talking with him and creating the idea and we had a few initial meetings at the school with children and that’s where the idea for the animal groups came up from what the children were asking about and suggesting, and Ted was getting up and meeting – doing dancing, showing like how people could dance. So we had quite a lot of groundwork to do.

The time required for this sort of groundwork is not to be underestimated, either. As Paul Wilson points out:

We’re actually getting back to grass roots, or closest connections to the Wauthaurong people which gives it a much more holistic base that we’re actually from where we were four years ago. It actually takes a while to do that. It takes a while to build relationships, and that’s been really rewarding that those people are coming forward and seeing the value in the program and wanting to be a part of it.

Then of course there is the question of how to fund it. Another important principle underpinning the project is not only valuing volunteers and the work that they do, but the payment of professionals for what they do. Highly trained and skilled Indigenous Australian artists are to be paid for contributing their talent, as all artists may expect to be paid, and other sections of the wider community have their roles to play in this aspect of the project. Meredith Barclay has more to say on this point:

...And then we needed to find some money. The school agreed to go ahead with it and we found the [The City of Ballarat] grant was worth three thousand dollars through Ballarat City Council [with the help of] Peter Innes who was Buninyong Ward councillor at the time, so that really got the project going and then we knew we could afford some artists to come in and work on it.

Other sponsors acknowledged in the program are Buninyong Soils and Garden Supplies, Wayne Whykes (from WBW Metal Fabrication), AWD Earthmoving, Buninyong Newsagency, and the Ballarat Foundation. A significant source of funding for the 2009 production was the money awarded as part of the Education Excellence Award, which the school decided to put into that year’s production of The Story of Buninyong.

Meredith Barclay is a parent of children at the school, with a job of her own as well. She is not a paid member of staff. Neither is Miranda Donald a paid member of staff. This is the case for other parent volunteers. Meredith Barclay and Miranda Donald had a major undertaking on their hands:

It’s impossible really so we had to select a grade group and we selected Grade Four because they had a unit, a sequence of learning on the history of Buninyong they call it, so they were already doing quite a bit on Buninyong and then we needed to get together as a steering committee and I have, sort of, done these things in the past and new that we needed to get parents on board and community people.
Having identified the scope of the job ahead of herself, Miranda Donald and the group working with them on this, there was more to do in getting the project off the ground:

So right from the beginning we had Marjory Pickford on board who is the Koori Regional Education Development Officer. We had Ted on board, we had teachers, Grade Four teachers and we also knew that we’d need to get in the specialist teachers, the art music areas because we wanted it not just to be a musical. We wanted it to be the visual, music and performing arts, the whole range, so we actually managed to embed it in the school curriculum or frameworks I guess.

Her comments here indicate the pedagogical and curriculum concerns, along with practical and logistical ones, addressed in the program. The people driving the program aimed for ‘the full range’, and the outcomes indicate that they managed this, as the children said when asked how they felt about their experience. Their comments cover that ‘full range’:

I liked when Peter Lovett talked about the history.
I like the bit about when we went up Mt Buninyong and made clap sticks.
I really loved how we got to act out the animals.
And how we all had a great time.
I liked about all the music made for our dances and that.
We made the dresses and we made the costumes.
I was an eagle.

It is not only the children who learn. Paul Wilson says, ‘There are different things in Indigenous culture that you don’t know. You don’t learn it through uni, even though I did Indigenous Studies at uni. I learned a hell of a lot, just how in touch with earth probably that Indigenous Australians are.’

Teacher Shaun O’Loughlin has grown up in Buninyong and now teaches at the school. He too has learned from his involvement in the project:
I’ve had a pretty good understanding of the buildings and the landmarks and things like that. But I think I’ve learned a lot about the connections between Mt Buninyong and Mt Elephant. I think I’ve increased my knowledge with that, there’s no doubt about that. And also just being, or coming into contact with say, Aboriginal elders, which we’ve been lucky enough to do with Ted Lovett and people like that, you know, it’s been great to meet those people...I think you learn a greater appreciation and respect.
The cultural days (see Appendix 2) and the School to Summit walk (Appendix 3) are major aspects of learning what Indigenous Australians teach. That map is represented in western conventions of topographical feature representations, and includes landmarks of European presence. The route is populated with a range of cultural and physical markers: the buildings of the town; the mountain both as volcano and place of cultural significance for Indigenous Australians and European farmers; and people associated with all of these to talk to the children as they come to each marked spot. Woven through the various sites of focus is an Indigenous Australian presence. Overall, it is a visual, oral and tactile experience. Children interpret what they see, hear, and do on the basis of knowledge developed prior to the walk. The walk itself is not based on print. Neither is the walk up Mt Elephant, nor the trip to Lal Lal Falls.
3. Scaffolding the Learning in the Classroom

Bradford’s (2001) analysis of the fiction and non-fiction literature that Australian children have traditionally engaged about their own country’s people indicates systemic and deeply ingrained racism within those texts, a racism that has yet to be addressed in school textbooks. It is with some hope that we look to the future in this regard. It is a point that is graphically represented on the 2008 program cover, anticipating this feature of the proposed National Curriculum. Indeed, a salient feature of the Buninyong Primary School over the years is this anticipation of developments not only in curriculum but in wider social considerations of issues raised by its focus on Indigenous Australian perspectives. The mural of 2006 and the subsequent 2007 planning for the 2008 production pre-dates that most significant event in Australia in relation to reconciliation concerns—the apology eloquently and sensitively delivered by then Prime Minster Rudd (2008). The steps that The Story of Buninyong has taken positions it within a timely, relevant, and socially significant wider national context, even as it is focused on its own regional community.

The non-fiction texts that have traditionally informed school programs in relation to Indigenous Australian history and current social positioning are some steps behind modern developments as far as Indigenous Australian experience is concerned. Not only are these texts derived from concepts of what Sheehan (2010) refers to as post-colonial pedagogies, but there are also gaps on this point of Indigenous Australian perspectives on the historical, economic, social and cultural narratives told in these books. Such gaps in such literature have been addressed by other books selected as part of the project, written and illustrated by Indigenous Australian authors and artists. What is perhaps more important is the traditional forms of storytelling by local Indigenous Australian community members, and the sessions on things like basket weaving and painting during which they talk to the children in ways that go beyond the sort of everyday school talk engaged by their classroom teachers and into conversations about legends, personal backgrounds and relationships (Zeegers, 2010b). The two excerpts given below are from the same session, one of a teacher talking to the children, and one of one of the artists talking to the children. They illustrate this point:

More than European history
All right, what I want to talk to you about now is this. I have gone through all of your story writing and what I’ve done is this. I have–you’ve underlined the words you thought you’ve got wrong, if you’ve spelt those words correctly I’ve put a tick, meaning you don’t have to change the word. So for example, Nathan spelt ‘preparing’ P-R-E-P-A-R-I-N-G and he put a line under it. He thought it was wrong but it was right. I’ve put a little red tick next to it. However, there are some words that you didn’t underline, all right, and they were wrong and what I’ve done is underline them for you, all right? So if you need to change the word, get yourself a dictionary, okay, and look up the word. There’s not too many spelling mistakes which is good. So what I’m going to do is give these back to you and it’s time for you to do your good copy and I’ll give you paper to do your good copy on and then I’ll put this into your file.

The teacher’s instructions are to the point, designed to help the children understand important points about the written versions of the stories that will inform their further work in the production. This sort of talk is instantly recognisable as teacher classroom talk, of the sort described by Zwiers and Crawford (2011), where ‘Talk is often dominated by the teacher and a few students, or it does not advance beyond short responses to the teacher’s questions’ (p. 1). The artist talks about the stories in a different way, in oral narrative tones in which the painting activity is embedded, so that the instruction received is part of a seamless whole:

Living out here in Buninyong is really important. I think that we know the story about Elephant, how he was in possession of a stone axe. Has anyone seen a stone axe before? Buninyong even offered him some gold for it. Having agreed, they made up what is now the Pitfield diggings for the exchange. Some time later Buninyong reconsidered and desired his gold back. Elephant refused. Buninyong sent him a fighting message and the challenge was accepted. Now you might want to do a, like, message stick with some patterns on it. And that was a message stick and they met at the Pitfield diggings. Elephant buried his spear in Buninyong’s side and the hole can still be seen there to this day: you know the big crater in Mt Buninyong? That’s where he was speared. Elephant received a deadly blow on the head from Buninyong’s stone axe, and the gaping hole in Elephant’s head can also be seen today. Two men mortally wounded, retired in opposite directions and their bodies turned into mountains in the spot where they died. That elephant, his name was Jirrinellum in the local Aboriginal clan, the Jirrinellum Dundij and Jirrinellum means ‘Nest of Sea Swallows’ so you might want to do some swallows – little birds. Mt Buninyong was called Puninyong by the northern Wauthaurong clans and the local clan was the Kirritt Bullan and the name Buninyong means ‘Big Hill like a Knee’. See I’m going to do a big boomerang shape a knee, like a big knee and you all do your—fix your designs on top of it and it’ll look all right too—so that’s the story and if you can’t think of something you—there’s some people sitting around—heaps of people creating a Ballard. A Ballard means people, so, and that’s what that means and—if you’re having trouble with a couple of your designs— yep. And on the picture of the fella on the design, I’m going to try and paint a – this fella represents Buninyong because he
had the stone axe and there he is, he’s with his stone axe there—and I was even thinking about putting in Mt Elephant, and I was even thinking of putting him in over there with the spear, just so people can recognise the story. That’s just an idea, you might want to do a man like that, sitting down with a spear and having a story.

The two excerpts given above occur in the same stretch of class time, the second immediately following the first. That exchange between the artist and the children is more recognisable as conversation, but subtly didactic conversation, without the formal sentences of formal instruction that people use in their everyday encounters with each other. Observing this, one finds children and the artist absorbed in their work as artists and as participants in a story telling session. The children have not been sitting in desk or on the mat to have a story told to them. They have, rather, been engaged in an oral tradition that is centuries old, and they have been engrossed. They have heard the story of how Buninyong came to be, and they have been doing their own painting as this has happened. Nor is the story told as a legend, or prefaced with a phrase such as ‘Local Aboriginal people believe...’, or with the sort of Just So story approach of a Kipling (1994) tale to a ‘Best Beloved’. It is measured, matter-of-fact, conversational, and the children are not entranced, in wonder, or horrified. They are engrossed, interested, and comfortable enough to ask questions and clarification of points that strike them. The basket weaving discussion is further illustrative of this:

Children: What do we make the baskets with?
Artist: Yeah well that’s special kinds of grass that grows, it’s mainly around wetlands and it’s really strong. It looks a bit like this, and it grows in wetlands very strong and the ladies they dig it out and they get different colours and they get red and they get green and they pull them out and they just let them dry for a couple of days and they come back and they split them in half and make little strings and then they start sewing their baskets. They make them into bags. They make bags, food bags, stuff like that.
Children: Do they dance?
Artist: They dance? Yeah.

Another such session with an artist includes a question, casually posed while the painting is being done: ‘Have you ever had roast echidna?’ It is not posed as an unusual question; it occurs as a naturally-occurring exchange between a group of people engaged in conversation, followed up with, ‘My mother has the best recipe for cooking echidna’. What is more, the children receive it as such, part of their interaction with the man scaffolding their own creative efforts while they work. Similar conversations include responses to questions from the children to the story tellers, such as their family experience of the Ballarat orphanage in embedded references to the Stolen Generations. None of it is forced, or formally didactic. All of it is reminiscent of family conversations around a dining table or over a piece of shared work being done; none of it is tailored to conventions of talk behind a school desk, but it is designed to enable the children to learn. It is a traditional method of inculcating in the young culturally valued and valuable ways of knowing, and ways of accessing that knowledge.
Talking through the symbols to be used, consulting the artist on the most appropriate artistic as well as cultural ways of representing their thoughts for that year’s *Story of Buninyong*, the work proceeds in a hum of chattering interaction. The painting that has resulted from the children working with this artist has been hung in the open space area by the Grade 4 classrooms at the school. It has been used for the cover of the 2010 program. I have included it below:

![The 2010 painting](image)

Here, traditional symbols are used to tell a story, and while it is the same story of Buninyong, for it does not change, and uses the same symbols in varying forms as those on the mural to the entry to the school, it is this group’s own representation of their understandings of what they have learned as they have engaged what may be learned from artists-in-residence.

Paul Wilson makes a point in relation to this:

> They were constantly telling a story, where teachers tend to present information, and I guess when you think about that, especially Tony and Peter. Tony through his music, he’s telling a story, obviously, and Peter is explaining about his didgeridoo, he would tell it through stories, and also the dances.

The children themselves make this point when talking about what they describe as ‘Dreamtime Stories’. Their descriptions are consistent with the sort of measured tones in the stretches of dialogue given above:
Well, he said, when he said it, it was very different from normal stories. Very, very different from normal stories.

Explaining this ‘very, very different’ nature of the stories told by Indigenous Australian storytellers, different from the stories that the teachers tell them, they say:

Well, there’s something really, really bad happening. They always explain it in a really nice calm way. Yeah. I feel calmer. And teachers normally use [different] expressions.

The children learn from such methods as Indigenous Australians in their classrooms work with them, talk with them, and create with them in a series of workshops conducted at the school before they move into the country on which that school is built. Art teacher Michelle Noyce has used these as bases for work with children in producing their own art work for the performance, stressing the source of their ideas:

...A lot from the children, from their workshops. After they’d had those workshops, they came to Art and we spent a whole term on brainstorming what we could make for the costumes. So we talked about the totem animals: what aspects are really interesting about the emu—the tail—and then we brainstormed: how could we make a costume, with limited funds, with limited resources, what could we make?

Meredith Barclay points out ways in which establishing the workshops as bases for developing children’s knowledge was achieved:

...Probably around June 2007, we went down to Kirrit Bareet and tried to find out who we should talk to and we got in touch with Ted Lovett—he’s not a Wauthaurong, he’s a Gunditjmara elder, but he represents elders here in this area. So, as you know, there’s not many Wauthaurong people in the Ballarat region, and we also met Murray Harrison—a very dear elder in the area who had written songs—and so we connected with people from Kirrit Bareet because we knew we would need to share the idea with people there. ...So we spent a lot of time talking with him and creating the idea and we had a few initial meetings at the school with students—with children—and that’s where the idea for the animal groups came up from what the children were asking about and suggesting, and Ted was getting up and meeting—doing dancing, showing like how people could dance. So we had quite a lot of ground work to do and then we needed to find some money. The school agreed to go ahead with it and we found the city grant was worth three thousand dollars from – through Ballarat City Council – from Peter Innes who is from Buninyong Ward, the councillor at the time, so that really got the project going and then we knew we could afford some artists to come in and work on it.

Some of these are pictured below:
In the years of *The Story of Buninyong’s* progress, each new group of children engages this sort of conversational, visual and tactile teaching and learning approach to giving, receiving, developing and displaying new knowledge as part of the project. It is the knowledge which will be drawn upon when producing the music, dance, story, and individual idiosyncrasies that feature in any such work. Each group, then, explores print, visual and oral texts, and each produces its own responses to those texts in writing and performing their own songs, making their own props and performing their own stories in dance, as informed by their own engagements with the various texts and with the various Indigenous Australian artists. Each group draws on intrinsically ethical methods, as described by Sheehan (2010), based on visual narratives, oral storytelling, and song and dance. As Peter Lovett says, ‘It’s all about learning now, and that’s something that all children need, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. Their learning curve...education is the most important thing’.
4. Scaffolding the Learning in the Landscape

The following photographs taken on days on which the children left the classroom to enter country are evocative of the natural beauty of what they have encountered on the journeys suggested in the program covers of the various productions:

Now they are to look at the country in which they live with differently-informed eyes, developed out of engagement with a number of print, oral, tactile, music and visual texts that have led them to other dimensions of their history as Australians. Indeed, they will learn to read this country, using a different form of reading, a culturally-based visual literacy that goes beyond the confines of the covers of a book, and they are scaffolded in this by Indigenous Australian participants in the program. When this is done, children are positioned in a physical landscape that has new meanings for them, meanings to which they have been introduced as culturally-appropriate learning experiences have been formed as a basis from which to proceed. They started this earlier in the day with a Smoking Ceremony and its associated Welcome to Country. In 2010, this was warmly and generously given by a fifth generation Wauthaurong woman elder:

Good morning ladies and gentlemen and students. Kim Barne Barre. Hello. My name is Marlene. This is my country. I am a fifth generation Wauthaurong. As a Wauthaurong elder and traditional custodian I would like to welcome you to my country on behalf of my ancestors and present Wauthaurong. Welcome to our land.

It is a simple enough sentiment, but sincerely and seriously given. It carries with it a wealth of knowledge to which the children are now privy: the importance of country; the concept of custodianship rather than ownership of the country; the importance of this to the people in it; the identification of ancestry and with ancestors; the acknowledgment of traditional and age-long association of the Wauthaurong and this country; the respected position of an elder, regardless of their gender; the importance of being there with the express consent of the Wauthaurong; and the unequivocal welcome in the context of all of this. They also have the appropriate wording of the welcome, appropriate because it comes from a Wauthaurong person. None of these children could use those words of welcome, for none is Wauthaurong. They know that there are very few Wauthaurong in the region, or indeed in Australia, for
they have talked through such things in the various workshops they have undertaken. They could, though, if they were to make such a speech, acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, thus positioning themselves culturally correctly in this context.

The children already know that they will adopt the totems that they will work with as the project progresses, but that they will adopt these themselves, based on their developing understandings of the totems and their significance. They have been prepared for an extra dimension of their positioning in the land they are to explore with newly-informed eyes, as possible wallabies, or cockatoos. Their teacher explained it earlier, ‘It’s something that evolves; it’s not something that we tell you to do. You guys actually develop it as we go’. There will be important decisions for them to make on the basis of knowledge they will develop. Actively involved in such decisions, they are nevertheless scaffolded in this by teachers and others with whom they will work. One of the first of these on this day is Marlene, who, as a respected elder, has information that she considers useful for the children, and she integrates it with her welcome:

The Wauthaurong people are part of the Kulin Nation. Creation of the Kulin land and its people was the work of the great ancestor spirit known as Bunjil, the eagle, who still watches over the land today.

It is this Bunjil that figures prominently in the stories and art of the children, and he is represented on the program covers, shown flying high in the sky above the mountain. Marlene takes them into an important aspect of the country they will travel through this day:

For us, the Aboriginal people, the land has spiritual connections. It’s our mother. The human spirit is born from our land and returns us to it upon death. The land supplied us with everything that we needed for living, including clothing and shelter. Remember, work with nature and not against it. Imagine what it was like for my ancestors.

She includes a reference to the famous local Indigenous Australian man of the area known as King Billy, from Ballarat, and his wife, Queen Rose from Mt Buninyong, adding that in 1876 ‘were transported’, much as some of the non-Indigenous Australian children’s ancestors might have been in convict days, to the mission station ‘where they spent their lives together’. Marlene leaves the implications of the removal from their own country as transportation hanging in the air, and she finishes with, ‘Enjoy your walk’.

In less than two minutes, Marlene has encapsulated the program. Her welcome to country is direct: it is sincere; it is short; and it is all the information that they need to start their day. It is also the cue for the smoking ceremony to begin. The photograph below shows the children pulling the smoke towards themselves, breathing it in, and participating in the cleansing ritual. The artist and storyteller facilitating this day’s walk, Peter Lovett, himself a member of the Community Advisory Group, dancer, musician and story teller, explains its importance to them even as they experience it: ‘...a smoking ceremony is to cleanse the soul, the spirit of ourselves and the land we’re on’.
The cleansing power of the smoke

This applies to all the children participating in the program. There is no distinction made between Indigenous Australian children and non-Indigenous Australian children, in order to emphasise the unity of the history, and the unity of the society in which all Australians live. In this sense, the project takes up issues of reconciliation as these have emerged as part of Australia’s history. As Peter Lovett puts it:

It’s a lot easier to have all the kids respect all the kids as one. No-one’s a minority, no-one’s higher than another; it doesn’t matter what race they are. It’s very, very, very important and that’s why I don’t like to put any kids into different groups. Even if I did put the Aboriginal kids into a group, they would have felt a little bit different, and the other kids would want to know, ‘Why are they in that group by themselves? Are they any different from us?’ And I’d say, ‘No, no’.

Even so, there is a particular history of this place in which all of these children live. One feature of it is associated with the Ballarat Orphanage, which received numbers of Stolen Generations children, children stolen from their families in other parts of the country and sent to places far from where they were born. The area thus has an adult population of Stolen Generations children raised in the orphanage, and this, along with the decline in Wauthaurong presence, has created an Indigenous Community particular to the area. Peter Lovett explains:

People from all over, just who were part of the Stolen Generations who made Ballarat their home because that’s where they were placed and situated. Once they sort of got out of the shackles of being in a home, a children’s home, they wanted to find out their own identity and it was a very, very hard track for a lot of the people....We have a lot of people, you know, from different communities, who made Ballarat their home. We actually made up the totem of Baarlijan, which is the platypus, because we see the platypus, three or four different animals made up into one. We see our community of the Wauthaurong of Ballarat as five, or six, seven, eight different communities from all over, that make one. And we stuck together to be proud of who we are and where we come from.

Baarlijan featured in the 2010 production, emerging from children’s discussions of possibilities to pursue for that year, having been inspired by the story of the totem for the Ballarat community. As Miranda Donald says:
Look, there’s the platypus, the legends with all the different animals coming together...that was a really great one, and from a performing or a directing point of view that type of story would be fantastic to produce, or represent, because you have so many animals coming together to form this crazy looking thing. That ‘crazy looking thing’ took pride of place with Bunjil for that year’s production, yet did not play such a role in others. The way in which this project operates means that each new year’s production is fresh, building on each new group of children’s responses to their engagement with what they are learning.
5. Getting the production together

The community support identified by Sue Deans is fundamental to the success of this project. *The Story of Buninyong*, in its explorations of issues that go well beyond the current time and place, throws up a number of things that need careful consideration and address. Heiss (2006) stresses the importance of community consultation in getting the facts straight, and details correct, in her own on the Stolen Generations character of Mary Talence. She herself consulted widely in her own community to ensure that she had not got anything wrong in relation to the details and the sensitive nature of the material she was producing. It is an issue that any approach to Indigenous Australian material is to consider most carefully: is it permissible? Is it accurate? Is it authentic? Is it to be accessed by those not necessarily directly involved? Who has rights to it? Who does not? Are any issues of ownership of the knowledge to be addressed? Have they been? Will they be? By whom? Are the people who will do this recognised within the community concerned as having the authority, and not just the knowledge, to do it? Whose rights need to be safeguarded?

It is in this initial area that much carefully considered work is to be done. It is certainly beyond the scope of the children themselves, or indeed their teachers, to manage these sorts of issues. As Meredith Barclay points out:

...We knew that, right from the very start, we needed to do a lot of ground work talking with Indigenous elders in the area and suggest the idea cause we knew that we would need to get permission to tell the children the stories to be shared about Mt Buninyong and as we found out, there’s a story connecting Mt Buninyong and Mt Elephant.

It is an issue addressed by Peter Lovett:

Consultancy, you know, is really important that I see as an Aboriginal person. Other organisations should be consulting with their local Aboriginal group, even the Cultural Heritage group that are based here to get that information and make it more relevant. Just to send out the right message.

Music teacher and songwriter Steven Skilbeck takes up the issue in relation to his role in the program, not even considering the possibilities that Indigenous Australian artists’ work with the didgeridoo might suggest in his work with the children. The didgeridoo is not part of the local traditional culture, and Peter Lovett is careful to make this point on authenticity:

I’ve been playing the didgeridoo for probably 24 years now, and it’s just part of life now, that I respect where it comes from, which is far north Queensland, top of Northern Territory, Arnhem Land. We got it through trade probably 160 years ago, so I respect that instrument as a passing-on tool, and I had to learn the ins and outs of playing the didgeridoo....There’s a massive skill to it, control of your breath and different body parts used for the sounds and the vibrations and the breathing.
One of the musicians demonstrated a modern-day didgeridoo possibility, playing a tone poem, *The Hitchhiker*, where the sounds of the plodding, the cars flying past, and the slowing down police car are clearly identifiable. Even the police injunction to ‘move along’ is discernible. He suggested to the children that they could practise learning to play the instrument on their mothers’ vacuum cleaner pipes. Steven Skilbeck does not incorporate this sort of thing in any of the material that he works with. As he says:

I’m not Indigenous and I wouldn’t teach the didj, and I don’t want to take anything away. So much has already been taken away, you know?

It is an integral part of teaching the children respect for knowledge, values, and culture at first hand. Even so, *The Hitchhiker* and vacuum cleaner pipes indicate a scope for levity in the middle of very serious considerations, and for very modern implications. As Peter Lovett puts it:

Anybody can [choreograph a new dance from stories]. That’s part of our culture, that is creating new stories. So we try and keep the old, which is traditional stories, but also create the new. As I say, 2010, I see it as the new millennium, there’s a massive forward thrust for us, you know. It’s the future, so there’s no problem with people creating their own dance, if they have that right story line to it.

Along with *The Hitchhiker*, children have the example of *The Mosquito Dance*. Peter Lovett showed them this one:

We have story lines to all our dances. So the couple of dances that I did teach the kids on Thursday, one of them was *The Mosquito Dance*. And that’s a story about how we originally made our first repellent using eucalyptus leaves in water. Every time we slapped ourselves a lot of different animals, especially the crocodiles in the mangroves in Queensland, the crocodiles just thought, ‘Here comes our walking lunch’. So to educate ourselves about the different plants and the uses of plants, was part of our story telling, and we still do it nowadays, which is really good.

It is a dance which the children also recount with a certain measure of delight. At the same time, it is experience that opens up a number of possibilities for them to explore in their own work in *The Story of Buninyong*.
6. Children’s responses to the project

As Anstey and Bull (2000) say, we learn a lot about what children acquire from their engagements with texts when we ask them to produce their own. We are learning a good deal from the children in this project. Meredith Barclay describes the work done with the children as ‘story writing – dreaming with the children’. They have created their own narratives, re-presenting the stories they themselves have encountered in their work with the Indigenous Australian artists and craftsmen and women as they have worked with them. As she puts it:

It absolutely works and if – it really struck me [that] the children owned the story. They were saying what it was like to be a kangaroo and to be a crow and what was going on in the actual story so they were telling it from their own point of view and, well, that’s what you want isn’t it? You want them to be owning it and having their own voice.

Paul Wilson has a similar view:

How does the program work? It’s been wonderful. I think the initial conception, I think the first year was probably the best because we paid someone who does it professionally to help out with the program. However the cultural immersion days have been just as strong. Like the kids have the indigenous culture you know, stories and appreciation of how that’s come across. That’s strong in our cultural immersion days. They’ve got the walking up Mt Buninyong and Mt Elephant visits; they’ve been just as strong if not better because we’ve got more artists over the years to work with the kids and just really develop the program.... It’s what the kids want to develop and so there’s been a transformation to sort of showing the kids what to do, to actually the kids taking more responsibility and for them to do it themselves. Different things have changed over time too. There’s been more of the parents being the choir, the parents being the band or community members. Now the choir is all the kids. The band’s all the kids, so you’re seeing a transformation there, so you’ve got parents who are not just looking at just their kids in the actual show, the performance. They’re looking at the kids in the band. They’re looking at the kids in the choir. So it’s more ownership by the kids.

In previous work (Zeegers, 2011b) I have referred to a number of the children at the school, who had not previously done so, identifying themselves as Indigenous Australians, something which is not required at the school, and something which came as somewhat of a surprise as the project proceeded. Peter Lovett has commented on this:

Yeah. They actually did. I’d say they felt proud about what they were hearing, respecting their own culture and identity. That’s a really big thing, especially Victoria with Stolen Generations. Ballarat was a big stumping ground, as we call it. Stumping ground...Stolen Generation.
It is a feature of the project that has some importance, then, for the wider community itself and its Indigenous Australian population. Stolen Generations children who ended up in Ballarat came from all over Australia, as part of the uprooting and family breakups involved. One of the story tellers told of the technical impossibility of being an orphan in Indigenous Australian culture, referring to his uncles and aunts as his several other parents. At another point in his story he referred to his own background of being raised in the Ballarat orphanage. A child listener put these two pieces of information together and asked how it was that this man could have been raised in an orphanage, in this way leading the storytelling session into a discussion of the Stolen Generations and ways in which this had played out as far as Ballarat was concerned. Again, like the roast echidna question, it was all done in the same conversational tone as the story of Bunjil, part of discussing the ways of the world and living with this. Peter Lovett suggests that the adults have to learn as much as the children have to learn as part of this project:

> I reckon even a bit more to show that they pass on that respect and the understanding of the difference between I suppose 1788 and 2010. We still have a lot of Aboriginal people and I suppose the old saying of ‘Aboriginal people only make up 2% of the country’: that 2% of the country should be respected as much as the other 98% of the country. We’re all human, we all live the same way, we all breathe the same air, we bleed the same colour blood, walk the same walk, I say.

Children’s comments tend to repeat this. A constant response in the transcripts is one of how hard the children see Indigenous Australian life as being. In doing this they are responding not merely to the Stolen Generations, though, as they are referring to whole of the history that they have encountered. None of this a nice and neat package of information with uncontested meanings. As children engage the project with its focus on the meaning of ‘Indigenous’ as ‘belonging naturally to a place’, this opens up a number of possibilities for them to consider, not all of which is uncontested. As Peter Lovett puts it:

> There were a couple of conflicting events that did happen. We have the first one as an Irish speaker talking about our lovely plants that were introduced to Australia by European settlers and all I see in them is eyesore plants—blackberry bushes—that was mainly one, and what they didn’t actually talk about was indigenous plants that were sitting around in the area. That was part of my role. I spoke about the kangaroo apple tree, the meaning of it as a food source, the seasons it develops, which is really interesting for the kids and they had little notebooks and they took notes every time we stopped and spoke, but that was the most conflicting bit of the whole day, where we had the aboriginal input plus we had the European input as well. And I thought we should learn more about our own background and our own indigenous country. We should really know about our ancestry on the non-Aboriginal side, the events that have happened and have been happening since 1788.
The children are exposed to this sort of experience of dealing with conflicting points of view as part of enlarging their understandings of their own physical and pedagogical landscapes. Another artist, working with the children in the classroom, casually refers to this sort of thing as well, in a conversational style that characterises their interactions with children:

One special tree in here is the cherry burra. You can see the tree; it grows on Buninyong road, and it grows a little fruit on it and they’re only real small and the seed, it grows on the outside of the fruit and that was one of the berries that young Aboriginals used or people would pick and you see them when they’re in season they’ve got a little red cherry. They’re like that and they’re really nice. If you get enough of them together you could make a drink or something with it and that’s all the nectar off the bottom.

The children have resolved the conflicting views presented to them regarding plants in their own way, in the 2011 production, for example. Here, their brainstorming with their teacher regarding possibilities for songs and dances resulted in a number, carefully costumed and choreographed in consultation with the producer and director, Miranda Donald. The number is called *Weeds*, written by Steven Skilbeck:

We come to live and thrive
Put up a fight or step aside
It’s not our fault if we take up our place
But you won’t know we’re here till it’s too late

Chorus
We’re the slow assassins
Stealthy strangulators
The green terminators
Can’t you see
We’re the weeds

We love this land as if it’s our own
There’s nowhere we can’t find a home
If you’re in our way we’re gonna push you aside
You can creep, crawl, grow and run but you can’t hide

Steven Skilbeck’s brainstorming notes indicate that this idea came from the children on the day of their mountain walk and their engagement with the various adults who peopled the stops on the way. They have come to their own resolution of conflicting points of view.

When the children are asked about what they had learned, there is a number of responses. One child says, ‘We learned more about our culture’. The ‘our’ pronoun is interesting here, for it makes no distinction between one culture and another, which in itself suggests a certain measure of success as far as this project is concerned. Another child is a little more expansive: ‘We learned more about Aboriginals and we learned really more about
Buninyong and what happened before all those white people came along’. This child does not identify with ‘all those white people’ in any way; this is something quite separate from them and their own experiences of their world. A third does refer to Indigenous Australians and non-Indigenous Australians as identifiable groups within that world, though. What this child learned is, ‘Their history. What was here before we came’. The verb is ‘came’; it is not ‘settled’, or ‘invaded’ or ‘colonised’ or any such contentious terms. This child, too, has come to his own resolution of different points of view.

The walks have focussed on a view of the history of Buninyong as incorporating more than European history in the area, as the map in Appendix 3 indicates. The children do encounter Europeans who tell them of their family history and their ties with the area, they encounter Landcare and geological explanations of what they see, and they even have the Granny White of Granny White Lane (a fictional character included to suggest possibilities for the naming of the lane). These aspects form part of that seamless whole that the project focuses on in developing children’s understanding of the entirety of their history. After their walk, they are invited to participate in a brainstorming session of what they have learned, and issues that they would like to explore for the production that is to come.

The brainstorming sessions held with their music and song writer teacher indicate that they have registered quite a number of issues to explore in further depth. Steven Skilbeck draws on these to inform further work on the final production. One of these is reproduced below:

The thoughts jotted down by this student are representative of those that have been explored in each of the productions, and the 2011 production has picked up on them. The words ‘dread’, ‘terror’ and ‘pain’ are interesting ones here, more evocative than others on this list, indicating a very personal and affective response to what has been experienced by this child on their mountain walk. It also has a very physical perspective in its detailing of the land and its fauna, the legend of the fight with spear and axe, and the trees.
An analysis of the sheets shows that what the children have taken away from the experience is dominated by the Indigenous Australian understandings that have been generated, as shown in the following diagram:

![Diagram showing the dominance of Indigenous Australian understandings in children's responses.](image)

Of the 200 responses canvassed from this session, the children specify European influences as pests and weeds, and suggest dealing with these in relation to the Landcare information received. They do not focus on the things such as the characters, the buildings, and so on. In their interview responses, they talk about these, but the immediate impressions are those of the legends of creation, of Mt Buninyong and Mt Elephant, the traditional weapons, the physical nature of the crater and the spiritual creator, Bunjil. The responses are consistent with the making of connections that teachers identify as part of the learning experience of the project itself. Some entries are as pithy as ‘Death Axe Kill’, as evocative as perhaps the more gentle, ‘What you can see and imagine’, to inform further work.

The children also describe part of their learning as coming from ‘some books. And we did some projects’ before engaging the Indigenous Australian artists-in-residence program, just as the teachers say. One child speaks of his discoveries from the books they had consulted about John Eyre, he of the Lake and the Rock, and at the end of his participation in the production he concluded, ‘He really didn’t know what [Aborigines] were. He was a bit frightened of them so he started fighting with them’. It is a sophisticated, as well as generous and forgiving, interpretation of information that this ten year-old had encountered. Indeed, the children stress this fear on the part of both Europeans and Indigenous Australians upon early encounters with each other, referring to feelings of being ‘surprised’, or ‘scared, sort of’. They say, ‘We got the information by Australian History books’, or ‘We went to the library’ or ‘We read books about the first Europeans’. In none of these statements about early encounters do they skirt the notion of conflict, but neither do they cast any group in the role of villain of the piece. Children’s views are consistent with Paul Wilson’s comment, ‘We look the conflict that was happening and the settlement…and then we pick up Indigenous culture and then we just focus on the dance’. The children tell me of
this part of their learning, and then they too go into Indigenous Australian culture and the
dance.

In adopting this approach, those who teach these children tap into one of the most effective
ways of teaching children. They turn to the suggestive possibilities of storytelling, for that is
what indigenous culture and the dance are all about. The success of the film Ten Canoes (De
Heer & The People of Ramingining, 2006) derives from its positioning of itself as ‘a story
within a story’, drawing on the very human need for narrative to captivate its audience. The
children have been similarly drawn into this aspect of learning as part of the program, with
its specific focus on Indigenous Australian ways of knowing, and of generating knowledge,
from and through the land itself (Clarke, 2003). The children refer specifically to this in their
comments: ‘This man named Peter told us all about it. He told us all about the mountain and
all the stories of the Aboriginals about the mountains and stuff’; ‘There were three men and
all these emus they were trying to hunt and so they kept putting their hands on the ground to
see if the tracks were fresh’; ‘Well there were dances what the Aboriginal people did and so
I just got to join in to it and there were some stories about two kids that died’. The creator,
Bunjil, represented in what one child describes as ‘the beautiful brown eagle’ of the area,
appears consistently in the references that children, artists and teacher make to what they
taught or learned in the program. A particularly telling feature of this is the comment
by Miranda Donald:

...And there’s always Bunjil’s eagles, the wedge-tailed eagles following. For some
reason they just kind of appear that day whether it’s hot or cold or whatever, so
you know where we live it’s just so conducive to doing this time of interactive
hands-on experience.

For Miranda Donald, the Indigenous and European Australian views of the birds have
merged, in this instance. It is a point that is also made by one of the children: ‘I liked when
we went up Mt Elephant. Cause we saw Bunjil there.’ The name here is synonymous with
the eagle, and unselfconsciously used as such by this child.

The children also know how to depict the animals that they might be representing, having
worked with the dancers: ‘They acted out like the actual animals’, and the children could
model their own performances on these. It is confirmed by Peter Lovett:

...Music, art, dance, all of those things. That’s part of us. That’s a form of our
stories through music, dance, and art. It was all respected through storytelling, and
there was storytelling by our elders, which was a very, very, very big part of our
oral history, and that’s something that we’ve lost over the generations of, I
suppose, the mission days. A lot of our stories were orally told to the young kids
growing up, but since I suppose the introduction of the missions, I suppose we got
stripped of all our culture and respect and understanding our religion. A lot of the
time, the non-Aboriginal people didn’t realise that we did have a religion; we did
have a belief of our Creator. It’s not until you know our gods and our other beliefs
like other indigenous people around the world. We believe and we still have
Creation stories that we still talk about, and educate the school-age kids as well.
Because, as we know, there are not that many Aboriginal kids in a school, and it’s
really good for them to find out about their Creation stories of the country they live in, as well as the non-Aboriginal kids, so they all feel connected.

Basing their production on engaging the various features of this project, children make those connections that truly define learning.
7. CONCLUSION

Anybody watching the performance of each group of children in their production of *The Story of Buninyong* will be charmed and delighted by the enthusiasm, originality, and talent of the children concerned. Shaun O’Loughlin refers to what he identifies as ‘the passion’ of the children:

I suppose the performance relies on them. Miranda Donald does just such a great job, but it really comes back to the kids and if they really connect with it and take it on board, their roles and the performance, they are really passionate and put their best efforts into it. That’s what makes the performance so good. You know, they really loved it. We did some introductory work with Mt Elephant and Mt Buninyong walks and so they’ve got some sort of background knowledge before we start. Then once the performance starts, having that background knowledge and knowing how it all ties in, I think that the story really comes to life.

It is so much more than a school concert, though, and the experience of is, as Sue Deans describes it, a truly unique undertaking, designed to enhance children’s learning and connect them more completely with the land and society in which they live. As she says, ‘This was a shared celebration of learning’.

The connections that children make are what constitutes their learning, and this is done before they ever take the stage. It is the pedagogical underpinnings of the program that is the key to its success, and the basis of that positive feedback that teachers and children receive from each year’s audience members. That pedagogy is so carefully based on the sort of consultancy that Peter Lovett has identified as being so important.

One constant feature of each production has been the song written by one of the parents, Gerry Skene’s *Green Gondwana Land*. It has set the tone for each one (in spite of its gender bias) as children have explored themes and issues they themselves have identified as worthy of their consideration:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long time ago</th>
<th>Chorus</th>
<th>Today man comes</th>
<th>Ancient man he came</th>
<th>Sing to the land</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long time before man</td>
<td>Green Gondwana Land</td>
<td>He got to change everything</td>
<td>And live on the land</td>
<td>Let the land sing you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth forming</td>
<td></td>
<td>He cry to the land</td>
<td>He walk hand in hand</td>
<td>Be sorry to the land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like a stroke of an artist’s hand</td>
<td>Green Gondwana Land</td>
<td>Land not answer him</td>
<td>He speak to the land</td>
<td>Let the land nourish you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreamtime on earth</td>
<td></td>
<td>He move the mountains</td>
<td>Land answer him</td>
<td>You can’t tell where he’s been</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like beginning of time</td>
<td></td>
<td>If they be in his way</td>
<td>For 40,0000 year</td>
<td>Chorus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create this place</td>
<td></td>
<td>He not dream for tomorrow</td>
<td>Chorus</td>
<td>Chorus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made home body spirit: mind</td>
<td></td>
<td>Just live for today</td>
<td>Chorus</td>
<td>Chorus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Barry Peters’ own *See the Brolgas Dance*, and others which are ascribed to himself and Grade 4 students at Buninyong in 2008, again pick up on what the children have brainstormed with him after their mountain walk. They include *Don’t Upset The Mountain*, *The Berry Picking Pose* (written for the dances performed by Kangaroo, Eagle Hawks and Crows), *Kangaroo and Emu Song*, and *Old Bended Knee* (telling of the fight between the two mountains). The songs have been written specifically for that year’s Grade 4 students, and Peters (2011) has subsequently recorded them professionally. Subsequent years have seen different songs produced, again based on what the children have identified for focus, with teacher Steven Skilbeck taking up the major song writing role. His 2010 songs, *Baarlijan*, *The Lizard Song*, *the Kangaroo Song*, *The Emu Song*, *Down by the Waterhole*, *Fight*, *Death Lament*, *The Platypus Song*, and *The Kookaburra Song* are fresh interpretations informed by his brainstorming of ideas with the 2010 Grade 4 children on themes that, while they may have been known to him, were new to that group of students, and his songs reflect this. In 2011, his songs included a different version of the mountain’s story, with his *The Battle of Derrinallum and Buninyong*, as well as the songs with their focus for this year’s production on the topic of the land: *People Song*, *Weeds*, *Rabbits*, and *Fire*. In their annual efforts to produce a quality performance, information that is new to each new group is engaged in different ways as different people join or leave the project, with new material being processed. As Miranda Donald puts it:

> Maybe their ideas are getting better. You know you don’t want to repeat an idea. We had a very sort of simple idea the first year and the second year was also simple, but it worked really well and we had new songs. This year was a little bit more complex because it was the nature of the group of kids. They wanted something a bit more complex.

One would conclude that the program deserves the success that it has achieved, in all the areas that it has ventured. Teachers and parents’ time and effort, along with community support, parent volunteers, Indigenous Australian consultants, advisors, artists and craftsmen and craftswomen has taken it a long way. Weuffen’s (2011) review of the literature on issues emerging from professional debates and discussions that surround the National History Curriculum is a most telling consideration, for while *The Story of Buninyong* has anticipated that curriculum in its exploration of the notion of shared histories that may be foregrounded in future curriculum delivery in schools, and it has drawn on pedagogy grounded in authentic oral traditions to do so, it engaged those issues before they had even been raised in the public arena. Weuffen (2011) has drawn on the work of Haynes (2009), who
recommends that ‘students should first be taught the history of their local communities, and learn about the literature and cultures of the people who live in their midst’ (p. 435) before expanding their knowledge statewide or nationally.

It is difficult to select particular songs from the productions for special consideration, for they are all part of a carefully integrated whole, but two do stand out in relation to the strength of this project in regard to curriculum concerns. The first is a Barry Peters’/Grade 4 2008 song, *Love Where You Live* and its lyrics as capturing the essence of the project, picking up on the major features of the landscape, certainly, but also an emotional attachment to land and country:

Make a mountain, what’s it for  
So this land might be adored  
Pour it, flow it, to our school  
Let the rocks and lava cool  
Chorus  
If you want to know a mountain  
Let it lift you to the top  
Walk its every valley  
Look out from where it drops  
Never try to conquer  
’Cause that’s not how friendship gives  
You cannot love yourself  
Unless you love where you live

The second is the expression of hope in Steven Skilbeck’s 2011 song, *Ours Is The Future*:

Ours is the future  
We wanna make right  
All we’ve done wrong  
We can fix the land  
This is where we belong  
Those days are gone  
Those days of destruction  
All we need  
Is some real instruction

One would be hard put to express it better than this. Yet what the whole project of *The Story of Buninyong* has not yet been able to do is establish a sustained funding basis for its operation. It cannot go on in the way that it has, acknowledged as a highly successful educational enterprise, enjoyed by all those who participate, at whatever level, but having to find funds each year in order to go on. The good will of volunteers has been essential in its success to date, and this, coupled with professional Indigenous Australian artists’ contributions and teachers’ and school administration’s commitment has enabled great strides forward to be made. Grade 4 children in this project have indicated their capacity for quite sophisticated engagement with important aspects of their own history and the culture that has underpinned it. Supported by skilful teachers and guides, they have engaged a
number of conflicting views of their own history and reconciled them as they have
developed their own knowledge. More official acknowledgement of the program and
channels of funding are required to sustain it.
8. References


9. Appendices
Appendix 1: 2010 Production Poster
Appendix 2: Cultural days

The Story of Buninyong

Artists in residence for all 3 cultural days:

- Barry Peters, Children Entertainer, Singer/Song Writer & Visual Artist
- Paul Wright, Indigenous Dancer, educator, musician and visual artist

1. Cultural Exposure Day One - 5/9/08

Setting: Walking Courthouse to summit Mt Buninyong, Lal Lal Falls return

Theme – “Friendship and the Mountain”
Focus of the day will be celebrating our relationships to one another and the land – especially the mountain. Our primary input will be from insight and cultural of the indigenous people of the country, but also including recent perspectives along the way.

Objective – Introduction
This will be a day of beginnings. Children will be invited on a journey to relate with each other, the mountain, the past and the present and the future. They will receive their totem groups - Kangaroo, Emu, Eagle/Hawk and Crow. Our prime objective is introducing the ideas, the structure, the dance, storytelling, the song and the art.

2. Cultural Exposure Day Two - 12/9/08

Setting: Walking Mt Elephant, Visit Derrinallum P-12 School

Theme – “The Changing Environment”
Focus of the day will be on the way the earth and the way it changes. Featuring volcanoes, but also the human impact on the earth.

Objective – Exploration
This will be a day of exploration. We will explore the way volcanoes have formed and changed the earth, and the way humans, both indigenous and non-indigenous, have changed and managed their environments, considering the paths ahead. Children will begin brainstorming the creation of song and dance for the telling of their story, but the drawing together of these ideas into formed pieces will take place on the following Friday and throughout term 4. We do not know yet what form the story will take – we may follow themes, we may follow a chronology or we may make a creative story – this is an adventure in story telling for everyone involved.

3. Cultural Exposure Day Three - 19/9/08

Setting: Buninyong Primary School

Theme – “Dreaming the Story”
Focus of the day will be on workshops to begin creating the story, including dance for boys and girls, weaving, song writing and art ideas.

Objective – Creating the Story
This will be a day of creating. We will draw together the two previous cultural days and start seriously dreaming and crafting ideas in a range of artistic genres finishing with a BBQ lunch. The work we start on this day will be carried over into further preparation times and rehearsals for performance in term 4.
APPENDIX 3: School to Summit Map

School to Summit

- Dancing in the crater
- Old Trees on Blackberry Lane
- Meet Granny White
- Hostie Lane - the Artistic
- Hostie Lane
- The courthouse sentencing
  Woman's Dance
  Welcome to country

Mount Innes

Fire on the mountain top
Waving on the hillside
Songs on the mountainside

Drawn Horse on Granny White Lane

Crossing the highway

Hostie Lane Renovation

School Start Here
THE STORY OF BUNINYONG 2008

A community building initiative aiming to increase understanding of the place we live through song, dance, storytelling and visual arts.

**PRINCIPAL** - Robyn Jeffery
- Communicate vision of project to school council
- Communicate project to school community
- Approve budget
- Media promotion eg: local ABC Radio
- Inspire & direct Grade 4 teachers
- Support artists within school community
- Facilitate / promote project meetings
- Encourage & support parent/community involvement

**PRODUCER** - Meredith Barclay (parent)
- Instigate steering committee & liaise with Principal
- Co-ordinate all other key roles and delegate tasks
- Establish relationships and trust for project outcomes with indigenous leaders
- Develop and co-ordinate Cultural Days -
  - Friendship & The Mountain - The Changing Environment -
  - Dreaming The Story
- Produce the musical and set up choir and band
- Evaluate project outcomes with team members

**DIRECTOR** - Miranda Donald (parent)
- Direct musical / choreograph performance
- Liaise with specialist teachers (art/ music)
- Liaise with Artist in Residence
- Develop student, performance & confidence skills

**INDIGENOUS ADVISORS**
- Provide local cultural advice, information and permission
  - Ted Lovett - Indigenous Elder
  - Bronwen Rae-Ram - basket weaving/eel trap
  - Di Ford - Dancing / Movement advice
  - Paul Wright - Indigenous Artist
  - Nicholas Bostley - Kirit Barree Aboriginal Art & Cultural Centre
  - Greg Edwards - Corangamite CMA
  - Marjorie Pickford - Koorie Education Development Officer
  - Wayne Muir - Local Aboriginal Education Consultant Committee (LAECC)
  - Murray Harrison - Aboriginal Elder / Musician

**ARTIST IN RESIDENCE** - Barry Putters
- Compose songs & music
- Write story / narration
- Graphic design
- Instigate & follow through indigenous relationships
- Develop cultural days
- Professional Development for teachers

**COMMUNITY GROUPS / EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS**
- Leigh Catchment Landcare Authority - tree planting, environmental education advise & support
- Kirit Barree Aboriginal Art & Cultural Centre - provision of artist contact details and filming of cultural days
- Mount Elephant Community Management Inc - Lesley Brown
- Derrimut Primary School
- Kanawinka Geofark - Joanne McKnight
- Jenny Ryle
- Nicholas Bostley

**MARKETING / SPONSORSHIP**
- Barry Peters / Miranda Donald
- Generate Local Sponsorship & prepare grant submissions
- Media / promotion
- School newsletter / flyers / poster
- Co-ordinate DVD film and photographic recording
- Successful funding submissions:
  - Ballarat City Council
  - Tealstra Country Wide
  - Koorie Education Committee

**GRADE 4 TEACHING TEAM**
- Paul Wilson
- Jenny Bontilli
- John Podobilsky
- Specialist Teachers:
  - Michelle Noyce (Visual Arts)
  - Steven Skilbeck (Music)
- Link Story of Buninyong to Grade 4 curriculum
- Local History Unit
- Follow through artists' direction with children
- Accept the challenge of this creative journey

**PARENT VOLUNTEERS**
- Undertake jobs assigned: bag making, visual art costumes, basket making
- Participation in cultural days
- Chor/band members
- Gerry Skeen - composer song writer
- Zlatko Balazic - Photographer
- Diara Saxton - artist
- Anna Yates - Cellist
- John Sullivan - Lead guitar