

WAKAKIRRI

NATIONAL STORY-DANCE FESTIVAL

BUILDING RECONCILIATION, EMPATHY, AND UNDERSTANDING THROUGH WAKAKIRRI

In 2022, Sara, a teacher at Christies Beach Primary, partnered with Tamia, the school's Aboriginal Community Education Officer, to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives into their Wakakirri performance. Their story focused on truth-telling around the Stolen Generations. Despite initial concerns about how students would handle such a complex issue, they demonstrated remarkable maturity, highlighting the importance of acknowledging diverse stories within their school community. Their Story-Dance, "Always Was, Always Will Be," won a Wakakirri National Reconciliation Award and significantly increased student engagement.

The school's 2023 performance, titled "Learning from the Past, Changing for the Future," centered on racism's impact on cultural identity. Inspired by the song "The Children Came Back" and the NAIDOC theme "For Our Elders," the performance tied into the 20th anniversary of Nicky Winmar's iconic anti-racism stance in sport. The performance featured a yarning session with Aboriginal leaders, including past Port Adelaide FC player Fabian Francis, to deepen students' understanding of racism. Their story was performed at various community events, including NAIDOC and STEM congresses, receiving recognition for its powerful message.

Throughout 2023, the school focused on fostering a sense of belonging through cultural programs, such as a dance workshop with Adrienne Semmens from the Australian Dance Theatre, ensuring the performance remained culturally authentic. The collaboration with Aboriginal leaders and artists created an immersive learning experience, allowing students to explore themes of racism, identity, and reconciliation through storytelling and dance.

Looking ahead to 2024, the school plans to continue using Wakakirri to explore significant topics, such as the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the impact of the referendum on the Aboriginal community. The collaboration with Aldinga Payinthi College will allow students from both schools to explore these themes together, emphasizing the importance of working across communities to drive reconciliation.

Through Wakakirri, Christies Beach Primary has provided its students with a culturally safe space to engage with complex themes, building empathy, leadership skills, and a deeper understanding of Aboriginal history and culture. The program has become a key driver of cultural awareness at the school, fostering a shared commitment to reconciliation and creating lasting change within the community.

