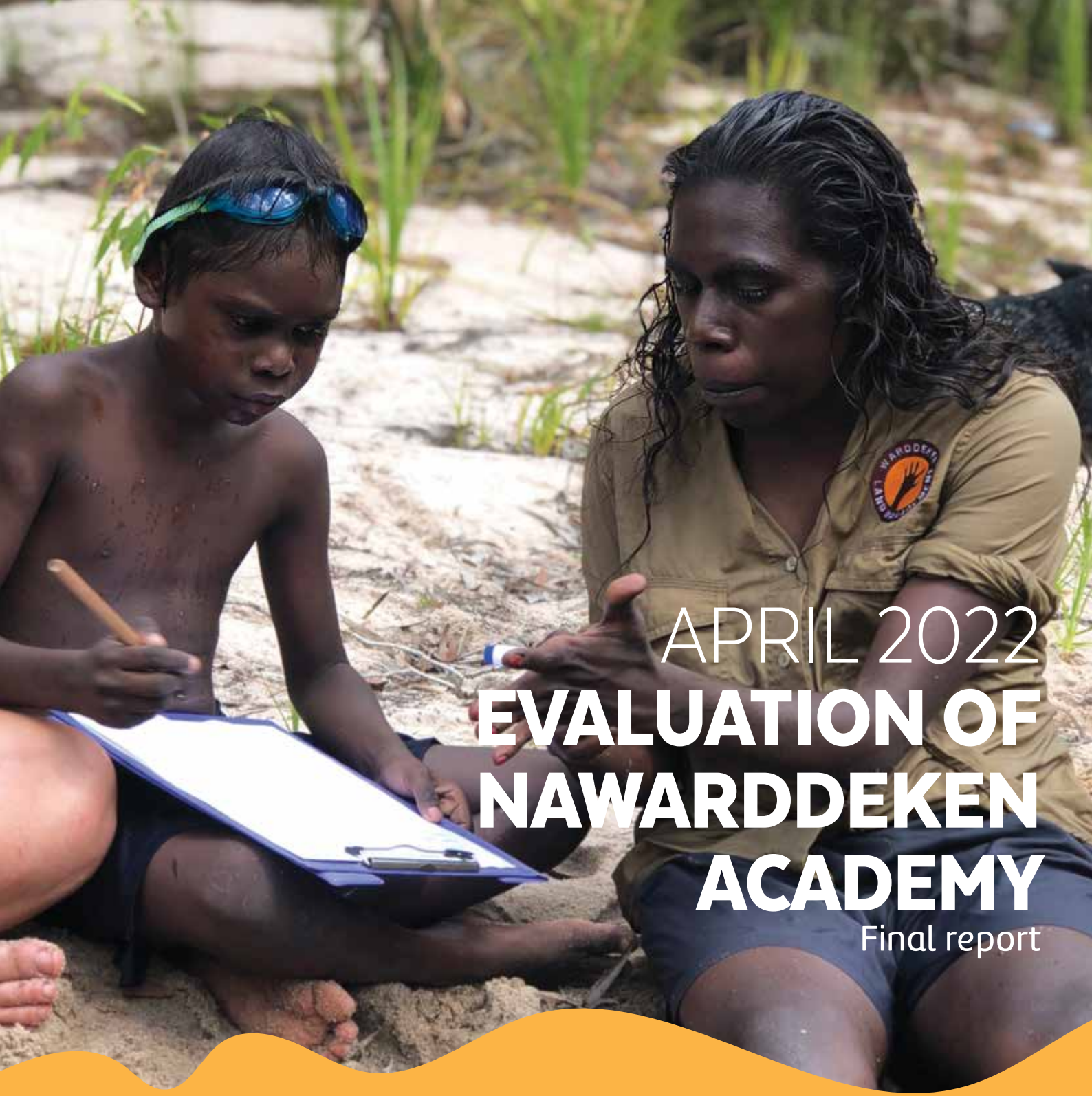

APRIL 2022

EVALUATION OF NAWARDDEKEN ACADEMY

Final report

NAWARDDEKEN ACADEMY

Karrkad Kanjdji Trust

Supporting country, culture and community

Batchelor Institute

Batchelor Institute
of Indigenous Tertiary Education

EVALUATION OF NAWARDDEKEN ACADEMY FINAL REPORT

April 2022

John Guenther and Robyn Ober for Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

Conrad Maralngurra, Dean Yibarbuk, Terrah Guymala, Elizabeth Nabarlambarl, Sarah Bilis, Rosemary Nabulwad, Serina Namarnyilk, Michelle Bangarr and Christella Namundja for Nawarddeken Academy community research team

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ABBREVIATIONS

DoE	Department of Education
KKT	Karrkad-Kanjdji Trust
NT	Northern Territory
RATE	Remote Aboriginal/Area Teacher Education program
WLML	Warddeken Land Management Limited

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This evaluation report represents the culmination of three years' work with Nawarddeken Academy and the homelands of Kabulwarnamyo, Mamadawerre and Manmoyi. Planning for the evaluation began in March 2018, and following the development of an evaluation framework later that year, and ethical clearance in 2019, an action learning process was implemented with a team of local Bininj community-based researchers. Batchelor Institute led the project, providing guidance, training, support and academic knowledge to the team.

The evaluation sought to assist the Academy to 1) learn from and develop its governance, academic and community engagement processes; and 2) to determine what the outcomes and values of its work are. It has done so through a robust methodology, which engaged a team of community-based researchers, to gain a sense of what the school's stakeholders think. The evaluation team engaged people in important discussions about the purpose of school, the way young people should be taught, what they should be taught, and about the strengths, successes and challenges associated with learning in the Warddeken homelands.

Interviews commenced in September 2019 and continued through a series of planning/action/reflection cycles in each of the homeland sites until October 2021.

The evaluation has found strong aspirations for education in the Warddeken homelands, with expectations that young people will benefit from local knowledge (kunmayali), learning with Kunwinjku language (kunwok), with strong support for cultural values derived from learning on-Country. People expect to see Bininj in control and they want to see pathways for young people to engage in work on-Country and at school.

Findings point to strengths and opportunities for education in the Warddeken homelands. The Academy's strategic planning processes have drawn on the findings and their implications to map a path to the future.

Key findings

The findings point to strong educational aspirations for young people in the Warddeken homelands.

- Respondents wanted to see parents engaged in children's education.
- Respondents were looking forward to employment and job opportunities on-Country.
- There was an expectation that Bininj and Balanda should work together.
- Respondents wanted to see Bininj in control of education.
- Respondents wanted to see opportunities for assistant teacher training.
- Many respondents wanted to see qualified Bininj teachers in classrooms.
- Attendance at school was identified as a priority for children.
- There was a recognition that financial support for the Academy was critical for its sustainability.
- Respondents recognised the roles of Elders in intergenerational learning.
- Respondents wanted to see a Bininj curriculum developed.

These aspirations were framed by a recognition of the benefits and challenges associated with homeland schooling. Respondents:

- Recognised the benefit of learning 'both ways'.
- Acknowledged the benefit of learning on and from Country.
- Recognised the benefit of Bininj knowledge (kunmayali).
- Recognised the benefit of first language (kunwok).
- Recognised the priority of respect for culture.
- Recognised the challenges of working together in partnership.
- Were frustrated by governments' role in homelands.
- Identified challenges and opportunities associated with family mobility across the homelands.

These benefits and challenges were also reflected in the philosophical positioning of schooling and its purpose for young Bininj. Respondents:

- Saw a purpose for school supporting Bininj ontologies and cosmologies.
- Wanted to see school contribute to developing strong, confident children (wurrurd).
- Identified the need for school to build literacy and numeracy skills.

A key function of education for young Bininj was to support them in the context of a changing world. This support was premised on:

- The importance of teaching values to young Bininj.
- Opportunities for young people to learn and work on-Country.

Response to evaluation questions

HOW DOES THE ACADEMY ENGAGE YOUNG PEOPLE IN LEARNING?

From the perspective of our respondents, the importance of Nawarddeken Academy as a homeland school is reflected in their belief in the importance of learning on-Country, with a 'Bininj first' and both-ways approach. Also reflected in this belief is a view that Balanda teachers should respect Bininj language and culture and do all they can to learn from Bininj. The interviews suggested that they were doing this.

HOW DOES THE ACADEMY SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE'S VALUES AND ASPIRATIONS (AND THEIR PARENTS) FOR THEIR FUTURE?

Among respondents, there was a strong belief in the need for supporting young people in their learning and, more specifically, to provide a strong moral and ethical foundation for them so they could make good choices in the future. They gave every indication that this was being achieved by the Academy. It is reflected in the leadership of the school at a board level and also in the support offered by Elders. Those values and aspirations are centred on the primacy of Bininj culture, language and knowledge, and the importance of learning on-Country, with a view to later working on-Country. There is a strong connection to the work of Warddeken Land Management, which creates opportunities for students to engage with workers (who are also parents) and take part in on-Country work-related activities.

HOW CAN THE ACADEMY WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH THE FAMILIES/COMMUNITY/WARDDEKEN TO ENSURE THAT ITS HOPES AND EXPECTATIONS ARE FULLY MET?

One of the positive outcomes of the evaluation work carried out by the community-based researchers is that it is creating a space for conversations to take place about what education means, what it is for and how it should be delivered. In many cases, the initial response we received to the questions we asked suggested that community members had never been challenged to think about the issues we raised. And for some, the first response was one they had clearly heard from somewhere else, but was not from their own thinking. The other observation we can make is that the team of community-based researchers are now much more adept at asking these questions and have thought through many of the deeper issues that underpin the questions. Our community-based researchers, therefore, can continue to play an important role in raising questions and engaging Bininj in discussions about their aspirations and how to achieve them.

WHAT KINDS OF OUTCOMES AND SHARED VALUES DOES THE ACADEMY AIM TO ACHIEVE AND HOW WELL DOES IT ACHIEVE THESE?

The outcomes attributed to the Academy were grouped according to four main themes.

- Instilling pride in culture and language.
- Making visible a pathway to working on-Country.
- Modelling Bininj values.
- Focus on English and Kunwinjku literacy and numeracy.

The extent to which the Academy has been able to achieve these outcomes and values varied, but in general there has been considerable progress made by the school towards achieving the outcomes and the aspirations described earlier. Where there is room for improvement, these are being addressed by strategic planning processes.

Implications for strategic planning

The evaluation findings point to a series of strategic directions:

- Strategy 1: Focus on Kunwinjku literacy (reading and writing) as a priority, not just for children but also for adults.
- Strategy 2: Identify and recruit more Bininj (assistant) teachers.
- Strategy 3: Create training pathways for existing Bininj staff based on an assessment of their skills.
- Strategy 4: Support Balanda teachers with their learning of Bininj culture and language.
- Strategy 5: Ensure that Bininj histories and stories are reflected in the development of the Academy.
- Strategy 6: Make the connection between what happens at school and work that happens on-Country clearer.

Given the skills developed by the Bininj community research team, their involvement in evaluation was also identified as a priority.

INTRODUCTION

This report presents findings of an evaluation of Nawarddeken Academy conducted by Batchelor Institute and community-based researchers from 2019-21. Nawarddeken Academy is an independent school in the Warddeken Indigenous Protected Area in the West Arnhem region of the Northern Territory. The school was originally established at Kabulwarnamyo, and following a lengthy process, obtained registration for sites at Mamadawerre and Manmoyi. The evaluation has worked with all three homeland sites. It was designed as an action research process.

In this report, we present the detailed findings from the evaluation, response to the evaluation questions and implications for strategic planning. We also present background information and literature to put the findings into context.

Background: establishment and development of Nawarddeken Academy

The Nawarddeken Academy story begins in 2002 when professor Bardayal Lofty Nadjamerrek OAM established the Manwurrk Rangers at Kabulwarnamyo, a forerunner of the company today known as Warddeken Land Management Limited (WLML). This ranger program pioneered Australia's first carbon abatement project, allowing Traditional Owners to live and work on their country (see Nawarddeken Academy Limited, 2021).

In August 2015, the Nawarddeken Academy was established at the request of Elders from Kabulwarnamyo in West Arnhem Land. The Academy is committed to working towards being a bicultural and bilingual Indigenous school so that young people can be strong and confident in 'both worlds' (Bininj and Balanda), and ambassadors for Nawarddeken (People of the Stone Country). The school is a deep source of pride and a critical piece of socioeconomic infrastructure for the community.

At first, the school operated under a memorandum of understanding with Gunbalanya School pending registration as an independent school. Registration was achieved in January 2019. A board oversees the Academy and includes representatives from the three homelands that were a focus for the evaluation: Kabulwarnamyo, Mamadawerre and Manmoyi (see Figure 1).

Until 2021, schooling at Mamadawerre and Manmoyi was managed by Gunbalanya School, which offered up to two days per week of schooling using a fly-in, fly-out teacher. This arrangement is not uncommon for 'homeland learning centres', which are scattered across the top end of the Northern Territory. After a lengthy negotiation and application process, the schools at Manmoyi and Mamadawerre were registered as campuses of the Nawarddeken Academy. From term 4 2021, all schools were operating on a five-day-a-week basis, with a total enrolment of approximately 50 students. At the beginning of 2022, the Academy employed a chief executive officer, a business manager (0.5 FTE), a senior teacher (1.0 FTE), an administration officer (1.0 FTE) and five qualified teachers, and approximately 12 Bininj assistant teachers. Through 2021 the Academy employed about 100 people as casual or part-time cultural advisors, senior knowledge holders, relief teachers, support staff, cooks and maintenance staff. Of the 123 people employed in 2021, 106 were Aboriginal and 17 non-Indigenous.

The Academy has had the financial and logistical support of Warddeken Land Management Limited (WLML) and Karrkad-Kanjdji Trust (KKT). The Academy is an integral element of the WLML's strategy into the future:

> Landowners from across the IPA stress the importance of maintaining knowledge of djang and associated customary protocols, and wish to see Warddeken assist in the maintenance of this knowledge. We will build on our already successful program of cultural activities, such as camps and bushwalks, and work closely with schools within the Warddeken IPA to develop a cultural curriculum that incorporates knowledge of djang. (Warddeken Land Management Limited, 2016, p. 19).

Figure 1. Map of the Warddeken IPA region showing location of Mamadawerre, Kabulwarnamyo and Manmoyi

Nawarddeken Academy objectives

Nawarddeken Academy aims to:

- Support the social, cultural, emotional and physical wellbeing of every child.
- Promote intergenerational education where families and communities share learning experiences to conserve Indigenous knowledge and languages.
- Empower young people to be strong and confident in western and Indigenous knowledge systems.
- Preserve Nawarddeken languages and culture through bilingual and bicultural experiential learning.
- Develop clear pathways for young Indigenous people of West Arnhem Land that match their aspirations and the aspirations of their families. (Nawarddeken Academy Limited, 2021, p. 7)

Supporting these aims is a set of principles:

- Respect, and the ability to integrate customary modes of learning guided by our old people with a 'western' educational curriculum.
- Facilitate a unique curriculum based on our land, language and culture, using formal and informal teaching and learning approaches, emphasising mental and physical health, while cultivating individual and collective respect and responsibility.
- Incorporate flexibility, enabling continuous improvement and positive responses to changing circumstances.
- Access all available technology to overcome the disadvantage of our geographical remoteness, and to ensure our resilience.
- Recruit, support and retain high-quality staff underpinned by strong leadership and competent governance. (Nawarddeken Academy Limited, 2021, p. 7)

Rationale and aims

RATIONALE

Innovative initiatives and programs in education are often built on a foundation of hope and frustration (Leadbeater, 2012). Hope arises from the expectation that 'education will change their lives for the better' (Leadbeater, 2012, p. 23). Frustration arises when school is perceived as 'rigid and bureaucratic, conservative and inflexible, resistant to new ideas and difficult to reform' (Leadbeater, 2012, p. 24). The emergence of the Nawarddeken Academy represents these tensions: the belief that education is fundamentally important for Bininj young people, and a frustration with the public education system's inability to meet community expectations. Innovation creates opportunity. The opportunities derive from the learnings that come with experimentation, from success and 'productive failure' (Kapur, 2008). Evaluation captures these learnings and informs the development of the Academy.

AIMS

The aim of this evaluation research project was to develop an evidence base that the Academy can use to 1) learn from and develop its governance, academic and community engagement processes; and 2) to determine what the outcomes and values of its work are.

With regard to the first aim, the evaluation is clearly set in a frame of participatory learning for development and improvement (Patton, 2011). Participation involves a range of stakeholders, including the board, Academy staff, parents, students and past students. Given the innovative nature of the Academy, the evaluation process grappled with operational problems, development and implementation of strategies, and governance issues.

> These problem-solving and learning-oriented processes often use qualitative inquiry and case study approaches to help a group of people reflect on ways of improving what they are doing or understand it in new ways. (Patton, 2015, p. 213)

Evaluation in this context is not about determining 'what works' but rather about identifying processes and strategies that support the sustained development of the Academy, affirming its integral place within the Warddeken social, cultural and ecological landscape.

The second aim focuses on the impact and achievements of the Academy. The intention is to disseminate learnings appropriately to various audiences: the Kabulwarnamyo community, Warddeken Land Management, funders, other communities/outstations within and outside the Warddeken region, and governments. Impact and achievement may include outcomes that are not expected and not desirable; we are careful not to assume that impact will only be positive – rather we are keen to see where outcomes can be improved and what should be avoided, as much as what has been successful.

The evaluation informs good policy, better funding arrangements and appropriate strategic directions of education for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory and beyond. This aim has elements of improvement and accountability approaches (Stufflebeam & Coryn, 2014) and 'utilisation focused' approaches where the focus is 'on intended use by intended users' (Patton, 2008, p. 37). In this case, the intended users are the Academy, the Bininj community and other stakeholders, such as funders and regulating bodies.

EVALUATION TEAM

The evaluation team was led by Associate Professor John Guenther and Dr Robyn Ober from the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. Community-based researchers were Conrad Maralngurra, Dean Yibarbuk, Terrah Guymala, Elizabeth Nabarlambarl, Serina Namarnyilk, Sarah Bilis and Rosemary Nabulwad, with additional support from Christella Namundja, Lois Nadjamerrek and Michelle Bangarr.

Figure 2. Team members Conrad, Terra, Rosemary (back), John and Robyn (front)

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review presented here covers some of the key issues that are pertinent to this evaluation. We first consider the history of the homeland movement, then consider the contemporary literature related to learning on/through/from Country. We conclude with issues related to 'both-ways' education, and bilingual education as it relates to homeland schooling.

Homeland schooling and the return to Country movement

The Homeland Movement or Return to Country Movement was initiated by Aboriginal people following government policy changes in the 1970s that encouraged 'self-determination' and that supported land rights. To a large extent, though, the impetus for return to Country was not a response to policy, but the desire of Aboriginal people – and there are examples of homelands or outstations that were established as early as the 1930s and 1940s on Elcho Island (Myers & Peterson, 2016). In many cases, people had previously been taken off Country and moved into settlements, facilitated by policies of assimilation or protectionism. The 1987 Return to Country report noted that:

> The history of the homelands movement is one of Aboriginal people returning to land from which they were encouraged to move by governments intent on centralising them in a number of communities to 'protect' and assimilate them and to make bureaucratic supervision easier. (House Of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, 1987, pp. 18-19).

In the 1970s and 1980s the number of 'homeland centres' grew quite rapidly. There were several reasons for the rapid growth of the movement, which in part were due to a desire to care for and work on-Country, problems associated with intergroup politics, petrol sniffing and violence (Pugh, 1993), the introduction of the Community Development Employment Projects program and a desire to live apart from the control of non-Indigenous 'missions' (Myers & Peterson, 2016).

Schooling and education became priorities for many families that returned to Country and while government departments of education supported schooling, it was at the request of Aboriginal people living in homelands. Writing specifically about outstation education in the Northern Territory, Haslett and Whiteford (1980) note:

> The Department of Aboriginal Affairs evolved a policy for outstations based upon reacting to 'felt needs' within the communities... This policy has ensured that the people of the outstations have had control of their communities and that there has been no heavy handed input from government agencies. The Department of Education has also adhered to this policy in providing education services only to outstations which have requested them and only at the level which has been requested. (Haslett & Whiteford, 1980, pp. 33-34)

The amount of schooling and the quality of education provided varied considerably, as described by Deslandes (1979) in his discussion of several Maningrida homeland centre schools. Haslett and Whiteford also write about the pattern of schooling that involved a visiting qualified teacher coming to a homeland for two to three days per week, and the use of untrained local 'teaching assistants' who were meant to ensure that students completed their workbooks until the teacher returned. The problem of limited training for Aboriginal homeland teachers was one reason for the commencement of the Remote Area Teacher Education program, managed by Batchelor College (Livett, 1988), and the re-introduction of the Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education program in 2021. The problem of ad-hoc educational provision continues to be an issue for many homelands in the Northern Territory (James, 2020; Northern Territory Department of Education, 2019). As we shall see in the findings presented later in this report, this is a recurring theme that emerges from our discussions with people we engaged with in the Warddeken homelands.

Learning on/from/through Country

Learning on/through/from Country has always been important for people living in homelands. But in the past 10 years the importance of Country in education has gained broader acceptance. 'Country' (sometimes referred to as 'estates' or 'clan estates') is not just a site for learning. Rather it is a 'pedagogic device' (Fogarty, 2010) for transmission of knowledge. Fogarty describes Country 'as classroom' (Fogarty, 2013) where learning on-Country is intrinsically connected to caring for Country and working on-Country. Similarly, Van Gelderen and Guthadjaka (2019) argue that in homeland settings on Elcho Island 'school is home and home is school'. Bawaka Country including Kate Lloyd et al. (2016) suggest Country 'includes humans, more-than-humans and all that is tangible and non-tangible, and that co-becomes with humans as an active, vibrant, sentient and sapient presence' (p.2) — hence Country is an onto-epistemic reality that shares knowledge with humans (see also Bawaka Country et al., 2016). Country is teacher (Harrison & Skrebneva, 2020).

The significance of learning on/from/through Country is recognised outside of remote contexts and, in some cases, is taken from remote contexts and applied elsewhere (Bradley, 2012), including with non-Indigenous people (McKnight, 2016) for a range of purposes, including professional learning (Burgess, 2019; Wheatley, 2018). Importantly too, for non-Indigenous teachers coming to teach on-Country, the need to build relatedness to Country is considered important (Jackson-Barrett & Lee-Hammond, 2019) as is the need to support a shift in understanding Aboriginal worldviews (Coff, 2021) and decolonising thinking (Wooltorton et al., 2021).

Our concern with this evaluation is more about the role that Country plays in learning for Bininj on their own Country. But for Balanda teachers, we see from the emerging literature, that there is a need for relational development as they engage with young people and parents on-Country.

Curriculum

Much of the recent research work on curriculum for remote students focuses on contextually or culturally responsive approaches. The idea of a Red Dirt Curriculum has some currency in the literature (Guenther, 2015; Osborne et al., 2014) and is similar to other approaches used in remote schools, such as the Warlpiri Theme Cycle (Disbray & Martin, 2017) and Yunkaporta's 8-ways approach (Yunkaporta, 2009). Red Dirt Curriculum is comprised of several elements, as shown in Figure 3. It is not prescriptive, though, and can be built around use of the Australian curriculum.

Figure 3. Elements of a Red Dirt Curriculum (Guenther et al., 2016a)

Themes	Includes
Engaging, integrated content	Integrated, contextualised, locally relevant
Language and culture	Local histories, bilingual, Aboriginal perspectives, learning on country, acceptance of Aboriginal English, stories
Local content	Adaptive to the local context, local culture, locally directed and supported
Meeting community expectations	Curriculum from the ground up, input and control from communities
Blending Western knowledge with traditional knowledge	As opposed to imposing Western epistemologies
Meeting student needs	How to manage and respond to student needs, relate to others
Multiple sites for learning	Using art and technology, on country
Supporting identities	Not white ways of being, building resilience, belonging in the place
Appropriate assessment	Beyond a simple focus on literacy and numeracy
Don't try to cover too much	Avoiding unnecessary jargon

Harrison et al. (2019) argue that 'Country is curriculum':

> Important and ongoing research (McNamara and McNamara 2011; Ewing 2014; Verran 2013) demonstrates the ways in which Country is the curriculum for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Country tells stories of the land and its history, the seasons, the plants and trees and transmits these to the younger generation through the social practice of life, rather than through a didactic form of classroom teaching. (p. 246).

The value or opportunity in adopting contextualised curriculum approaches is seen not only in the delivery of culturally meaningful content to students, but it also allows for greater local participation in delivery and in the development of resources. Some argue that to be effective, on-Country culturally responsive curriculum also must be decolonised (Wooltorton et al., 2021). Others talk about the need to 're-story' the Australian curriculum to ensure issues of social and environmental justice are brought to the fore (Renshaw, 2021).

There are risks associated with contextualised approaches to curriculum. One key concern is related to assessment. Assessing 'progress' against markers of achievement driven by local epistemologies and ontologies may well be difficult for a non-local teacher, though this does present opportunities for working together with local staff and Elders to develop appropriate contextualised assessment strategies.

Another concern is related to non-local teacher turnover, which can create problems for local teachers and educators as they are faced with the prospect of re-educating new teachers in the locally driven curriculum approach. New non-local teachers may think they are hearing what locals want, but the problem for any person entering a new cultural context is the normalised frame of reference, which makes it hard to see what is ontologically real for locals. This reinforces the need for local teachers — in the case of Nawarddeken Academy, this specifically means Bininj teachers. This may represent itself in unintentionally racist or axiologically biased perceptions of what is seen and heard. Discourses of deficit and disadvantage follow as differences are observed from the outsider standpoint (Guenther et al., 2013). Osborne (2017) asserts that

> It is difficult for 'outsider' researchers, educators and institutions, anchored as they are in their own epistemological, ontological and axiological foundations, assumptions and experiences of the world, to come to terms with the needs and context of what Delpit (1993) calls 'other people'.

Pedagogy

Etherington's (2006) PhD thesis, drawing on a grounded ethnographic methodology, concludes that participation in school threatens or interrupts Kunwinjku (West Arnhem region) pedagogy, though the employment of Kunwinjku in schools mediates a form of relational pedagogy. Also in West Arnhem Land, Fogarty's (2010) PhD thesis, using anthropological ethnographic methods, concludes that place-based pedagogies and knowledge systems highlight the disconnect between schools, community and work. This concurs with other assessments of the disconnect between schools, community and work (see also Guenther et al., 2015 discussed later in the context of measuring success). Gaffney (2013), in his comparative study (PhD thesis) of Papua New Guinea and a remote Australian community, picks up on the issue of teachers' roles in teaching 'English as a distant language'. He argues that teachers need to recognise that students can (and do) bring local resources to their learning. Kral and Schwab (2012) in their study of remote Western Australian communities focus on young people's use of technology in created 'learning spaces'. They argue, based on an anthropological ethnography, that these spaces offer young people greater access to learning opportunities. Importantly, these spaces tend to be outside of school.

Armour and Miller (2021) discuss the need for 'relational pedagogies'

> based upon a co-constructed model of learning which allows teachers to focus on the knowledge and capacities of their students, promoting a strengths-based approach. Using a strengths-based approach celebrates the identity and culture of the students and is achieved through two-way learning and a culturally responsive curriculum. (p. 170).

The idea of 'culturally responsive' pedagogy is gaining credibility in Australian First Nations learning contexts. These are, according to Morrison et al. (2019, p. 58), pedagogies that 'embrace and build on students' identities and backgrounds as assets for learning'. In the North American context, Castagno et al. (2021) have argued that there are six criteria for the assessment of culturally responsive schooling. They suggest that culturally responsive schooling

- Actively works to counter stereotypes of Indigenous people and/or communities.
- Students are encouraged to exercise self-determination and agency.
- Traditional and/or cultural knowledge is included.
- Diverse narratives and perspectives are integrated.
- Relationships within and among local/regional Indigenous community are understood and/or reflected.
- Academic language is built, but not at the expense of local Indigenous language(s). (Castagno et al., 2021, p. 5)

In their argument for culturally responsive education in Anangu schools of central Australia, Osborne et al. (2020) point to the need to draw on 'assets of the student's life-world' (p. 4). These assets include language, kin and relatedness, culture and land. In terms of 'land,' Lowe et al. (2020) argue that a 'deeper, ontological and political 'learning' that locates students in Country, rather than on and controlling land, requires a critical pedagogy of place' (p. 6). They also argue the need for 'epistemic mentoring' of non-Indigenous teachers working on-Country, as a means to effect more trusting relationships between teachers and community.

Given the above, it is apparent that the Academy presents several opportunities to maximise benefits from pedagogies that fit comfortably with Bininj positions, particularly in terms of 'relational pedagogy', use of oral language, learning on-Country or place-based pedagogies and through the creation of 'learning spaces'. The practical outworking of these strategies is, of course, up to the Academy. The other opportunity here is to explore

and work through what these pedagogies mean in practice, potentially incorporated into an action research project led by community researchers.

Both-ways philosophy, bilingual and homeland schooling

Both-ways as a philosophy has its roots in teacher education and is distinct from two-way education, which tends to have its origins in a more pragmatic and instrumental approach to schooling (S. Harris, 1990), though the terms are sometimes used somewhat interchangeably (Lee et al., 2014).

Early on in the development of self-determination policies with newly established teacher training programs, such as the Remote Area Teacher Education (RATE) program, Munyarryun (1976) reported that there were 'sixteen Aboriginal Teaching Assistants training to go to the outstations where they will be responsible for the schools' (p.57). This early RATE initiative was conceived as a kind of both-ways prototype where 'there should be both 'balanda' and Aboriginal education, so one does not feel cut off from both worlds, but hold them in both hands' (Munyarryun, 1976, pp. 57-58). Both-ways in this context clearly meant that Aboriginal teachers would take responsibility for schools in partnership with non-Indigenous people.

While both-ways was contested by Kemmis (1988) and definitions were avoided (McTaggart, 1987), the philosophical underpinnings of the ideas behind it were becoming well established in the minds of Yolngu educators by the end of the 1980s. Marika-Mununggiritj (1990) argues that:

> When we talk of "both ways" we do not have an idea of dualism. We view "both ways" in terms of Yolngu word "garma"... Garma implies negotiation between the two moieties - the Yirritja and the Dhuwa, and the coming to agreement about what will happen in the teaching and learning in the garma episode. (p. 43)

The philosophical foundations should be accompanied by governance structures, as noted by Stewart (1989)

> Both-ways education and teacher education implies, and demands, Aboriginal control over the administrative cultures of the school and higher education systems. This is important for both epistemological and ontological reasons: the survival, maintenance and development of Aboriginal knowledge are matters for Aboriginal people to determine themselves...(p. 12)

It should also be noted that both-ways in the homelands was (Disbray & Martin, 2018; Greatorex, 2017; Hall, 2017; Stockley et al., 2017) and still is (Van Gelderen & Guthadjaka, 2019) also associated with bilingual education. Department of Education reports in the 1990s downplayed both-ways, deferring more to two-way learning instead (T. Harris, 1990). The Collins review (Northern Territory Department of Education, 1999) dismisses bilingual education in this context as a 'red herring' (p.125) and the Wilson review ignores it completely (Wilson, 2014). But it is also true that both-ways is not synonymous with bilingual. Marika (1999) argues: 'This idea of 'both ways' education means more than just having print literacy in two languages – it means having a strong emphasis on Yolngu knowledge as well.' (p. 112). And as Ober (2009) notes, the achievement of 'both-ways involves a 'power struggle':

> We know it is easy to talk about both-ways philosophy, but to actually put it into practice is another story. There is a power struggle, there is misunderstanding and misinterpretation, however this needs to be worked through until a negotiation is reached between key players. (Ober, 2009, p. 36)

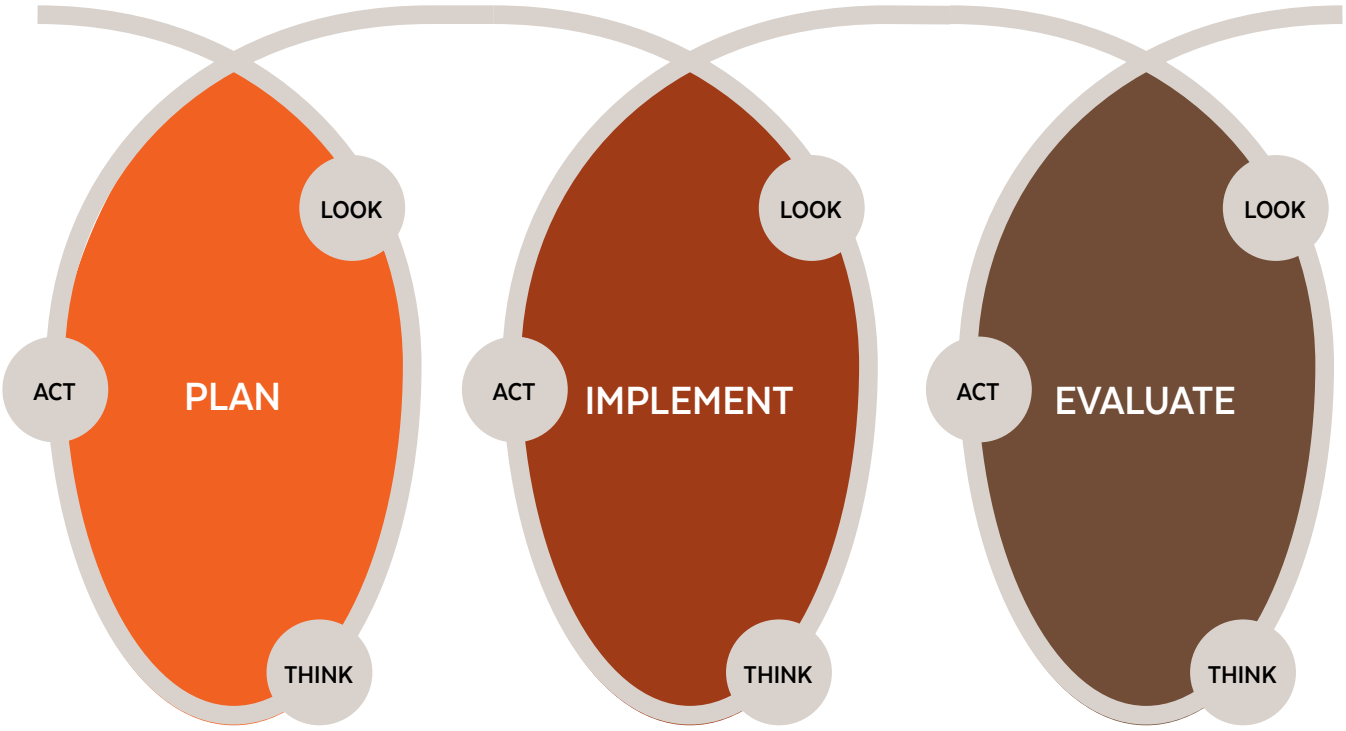
Further, both-ways remains a contested idea (White, 2015) and has been challenged, because of the risk that the philosophy becomes co-opted by colonising institutions and, therefore, needs to be decolonised (Campbell & Christie, 2014). However, as we will reveal later in this report, the ideals of both-ways learning are alive and well in the homelands we worked in.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this evaluation was built on a foundation of participatory action learning and research (Kemmis et al., 2014; Stringer & Aragon, 2021), which privileges local voices (Guenther et al., 2017), applying principles of Red Dirt Thinking (Guenther et al., 2016b) to the research context. The research follows a cyclical process, as represented in Figure 4 below. It is, in short, an iterative learning process that develops over time.

By 'participatory' we mean that where possible, local people will have a role in design, development, oversight, analysis and reporting. By 'action learning and research' we mean that the process will be formative and iterative with findings/data leading to reflection, then informing action, in an ongoing process. By Red Dirt Thinking we mean to challenge assumptions of conventional wisdom and ensure that the local ways of thinking (epistemologies), being (ontologies) and valuing (axiologies) are embedded in the methodological process.

Figure 4. Action Research Spiral
Source: (Stringer & Aragon, 2021 Kindle Location 909)



Evaluation activities

Table 1 summarises the activities of the evaluation. The table also foreshadows future dissemination activities later in 2022 and early 2023.

Table 1. Summary of evaluation activities from 2018 to 2022

Date	Location	Activity
March 2018	Kabulwarnamyo	Planning workshop
August 2018		Draft evaluation framework completed
March 2019		Contract signed
April 2019	Kabulwarnamyo	Evaluation preparation workshop Ethics application submitted
May 2019		Literature review
June 2019	Darwin	Community researcher training
	Virtual	Board review meeting
August 2019	Darwin	Ethical clearance obtained Evaluation Advisory Group met
September 2019	Kabulwarnamyo	First round of data collection, instrument development
November 2019	Gunbalanya	First translation workshop Board review meeting
February 2020	Manmoyi	Second round of data collection
	Mamadawerre	Data collection aborted due to bad weather
March 2020		Mid-term report, early findings + board report
April 2020		NT DoE ethical clearance
July 2020	Mamadawerre	Third round of data collection
August 2020	Kabulwarnamyo	Findings report presentation
August 2020	Gunbalanya	DoE ethical clearance obtained Gunbalanya School visit
November 2020		Board report
December 2020	Jabiru	Second data collection cycle planning workshop
March 2021	Kabulwarnamyo	Data collection and translation workshop, board report
May 2021	Jabiru	Strategic planning workshop
June 2021		Board report
July 2021	Mamadawerre	Data collection fourth round
August 2021	Kabulwarnamyo	Data collection aborted due to covid lockdown in Darwin
October 2021	Kabulwarnamyo	Data collection fifth round
	Manmoyi	Data collection sixth round, video recordings for AARE
November 2021	Maningrida	Australian Association for Research in Education planning workshop, video recordings
December 2021	Darwin/Maningrida	Australian Association for Research in Education conference presentations
March 2022	Maningrida	Board report and presentation
April 2022	Kabulwarnamyo	Dissemination planning workshop
September 2022	Adelaide	Planned presentation to the World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education
January 2023	Cape Town	Planned presentation to the Education Association of South Africa

Indigenist standpoint

Apart from Chief Investigator Guenther, all other members of the evaluation team are Aboriginal researchers and have been actively involved with the design of the evaluation, interviewing, translating, reviewing data and contributing to the thinking behind this report along with future dissemination activities.

Indigenist standpoint shifts the focus of traditional western research methodologies to embed and implement Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies to ensure research with Aboriginal people is implemented in a culturally responsive, safe and appropriate way. Rigney (2001, p. 9) believes that using an Indigenous methodological framework means pushing boundaries 'to make intellectual space for Indigenous cultural knowledge systems that were denied in the past'. Karen Martin puts her Quandamooka ontology (study of being) at the centre of her theoretical framework, for people's ways of knowing, ways of being and ways of doing to re-describe research methods. She aimed to research and re-present the worldviews of her people, (p.47) as 'the basis from which (to) live, learn and survive' (Martin, 2003, p. 205). There is a strong move from Indigenous researchers and theorists worldwide to reframe, rethink and re-present the research paradigm according to burning questions, challenges, dilemmas and experiences among Aboriginal people. It makes sense for Bininj people to be involved as researchers and participants in this evaluation, as they have cultural knowledge and language intrinsically embedded in the Country, people and language of West Arnhem Land. They know the past and present situation of education in their communities and can guide and direct their hopes for the future regarding education for Bininj children in West Arnhem Land.

Figure 5. Team members Dean and Terrah at Manmoyi

Community-based researchers

Nine community members were part of the team as researchers (See Figure 2, Figure 5, Figure 7, Figure 6, Figure 8, and Figure 17). Consistent with the participatory approach, community-based researchers were able to contribute their ideas and ask questions of other community members. Community based researchers also contributed to:

- Planning and preparation/design workshops – for example, to develop questions and present them in Kunwinjku.
- Data analysis workshops.
- Translation workshops.
- Strategic planning workshops.
- Conference presentations.

Evaluation questions

Evaluation questions drove the project. In general, this kind of project is guided by open questions that allow for ground-up processes to inform the outcomes. The questions below should be seen in a holistic community/country/cultural context.

Evaluation questions included:

1. How does the Academy engage young people in learning?
2. How does the Academy support young people's values and aspirations (and their parents) for their future?
3. How can the Academy work effectively with the families/community/Warddeken Land Management to ensure that its hopes and expectations are fully met?
4. What kinds of outcomes and shared values does the Academy aim to achieve and how well does it achieve these?

The point of these questions was to open up opportunities for learning and improvement, for participation and shared decision-making, for action and reflection.

Sample

Table 2 records the number of respondents by type and location of interviews, noting that some interviews were conducted while community members were visiting from other homeland sites. A total of 67 participants (18 non-local Balanda, 46 local Bininj, three non-local Aboriginal) were interviewed or contributed to the research – for example, as community researchers or evaluation meeting participants. Of the local Bininj, nine people participated as community-based researchers.

Table 2. Interview sample by respondent type and location

	Location of interviews			
Respondent type	**Kabulwarnamyo**	**Manmoyi**	**Mamadawerre**	**Gunbalanya**
Non-local Balanda outsider	3	0	0	1
Non-local Balanda associated with WLML	6	2	1	0
Non-local Balanda associated with NAL	5	0	0	0
Local Bininj associated with the NAL	4	1	1	0
Non-local Aboriginal	3	0	0	0
Local senior Elders	3	0	0	0
Local student or ex-student of NAL	2	0	0	0
Local Bininj community member	8	16	9	2
Total	34	19	11	3

Ethical process and practice

Ethical clearance for the evaluation was obtained through the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Northern Territory Department of Health and Menzies School of Health Research (HREC Reference Number: 2019-3419). Approval for interviews with staff at Gunbalanya School was obtained through the Northern Territory Department of Education's Research Ethics Committee. The evaluation team followed the guidelines and protocols of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (2020) Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research, and at all times we followed good practice guidelines for culturally safe evaluation (Gollan & Stacey, 2021) and the Australian Code for Responsible Conduct of Research (National Health and Medical Research Council et al., 2018). In practical terms, these guidelines and protocols for research and evaluation meant that we:

- Engaged local people (Bininj) in all aspects of the evaluation (establishing research and evaluation questions, interviewing, translating, analysis, dissemination and reporting).
- Followed cultural advice of local Elders and leaders.
- Worked where possible in local language (Kunwinjku).
- Worked flexibly to fit in with local contextual and cultural issues (e.g. weather, funerals, ceremony).
- Ensured there was adequate time for relationship-building and training of community researchers before the evaluation commenced.
- Followed appropriate data-management protocols.
- Obtained free, informed consent from all participants.
- Maintained confidentiality and privacy of participants.
- Provided regular reports back to community members, the Nawarddeken Academy board and other stakeholders.
- Worked to ensure there was a clear benefit to participants and the homelands communities we were working with/in.

Analysis of interview data

Interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Where responses included Kunwinjku language, translation back to English was facilitated in a series of translation workshops over the course of the evaluation. Transcripts were added to a NVIVO™ database, which was used to 'code' text from the interviews and assist the conceptual analysis (Patton, 2015). These codes established an emerging ground-up framework where themes emerged from the data inductively and iteratively (O'Reilly, 2021).

We assigned each interview with attributes to differentiate local Bininj, who were living on homelands or who were Traditional Owners for Country, from non-local Balanda and non-local Bininj/Aboriginal people from elsewhere. These attributes allowed us to differentiate views of different groups of people. For example, we were able to determine whether a particular opinion was held more by Bininj locals or non-locals. We are careful not to further attribute responses to particular groups, except for example in the cases where it is obvious that a non-local person is speaking as a worker in Warddeken Land Management or the Academy. This is to ensure confidentiality and privacy.

Figure 6. Serina and Robyn working on transcript translations at Gunbalanya

Figure 7. Team members Robyn and Michelle explaining consent at Manmoyi

Figure 8. Dean and Terrah interviewing at Manmoyi

FINDINGS

In this section, we present findings from the evaluation based on the data obtained in interviews. These are firstly summarised in Figure 9 and then unpacked in more detail afterwards.

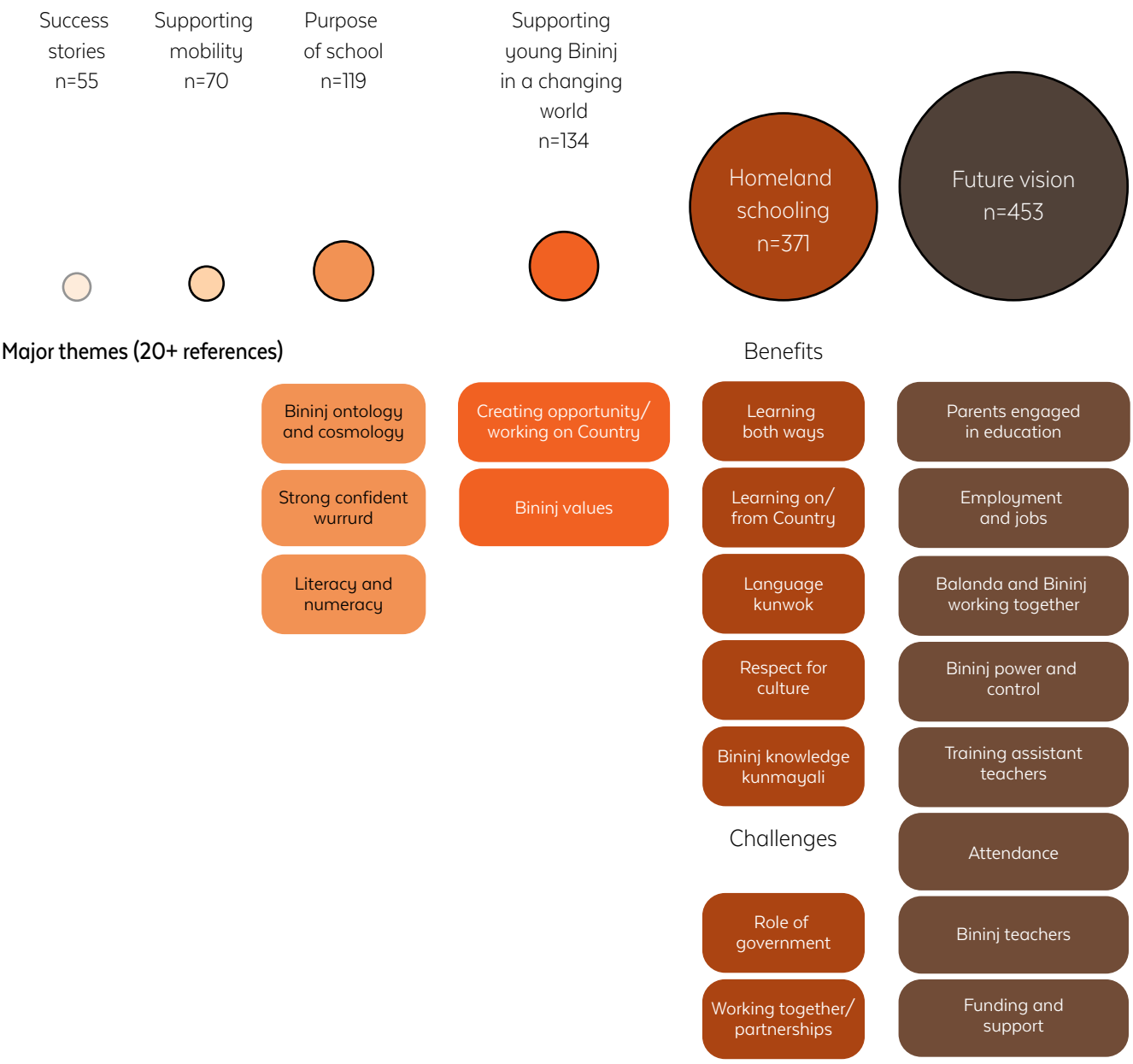
The diagram is intended to provide a representation of the data in terms of the relative weight of the evidence under the main headings of future vision, homeland schooling, supporting young Bininj in a changing world, the purpose of school, supporting mobility and success stories. These groupings are loosely related to the questions we asked of participants (see Appendix 1. Interview questions), though often a response to one question shifted to a different topic. Further, respondents were free to raise any issues they wished to discuss beyond responses to interview questions.

In our presentation of findings, we focus mostly on the major themes (20 or more references) and give a brief commentary on the minor themes (10-19 references). While we recognise the importance of every response, we have not provided commentary on themes that attracted fewer than 10 responses.

Where interviews were conducted in language, our findings are presented as translations back into English, so the flow of the responses may not be as clear as those where first language English speakers responded. Our commentary around quotes should help in gaining a sense of what was intended.

Summary tables of all themes identified in the data are shown in Appendix 2, in Table 5 (future vision), Table 6 (homeland schooling), Table 7 (supporting young Bininj in a changing world), Table 8 (purpose of school), Table 9 (supporting mobility) and Table 10 (stories of success).

October 2021



Minor themes (10-19 references)

Pride

Learning
Successful young people

Cultural knowledge
Mobile or multi-site school

Bininj make strong choices
Support wurrurd

Internet and technology
More secondary activities for young people
Work experience and training

Walking in two worlds
Bilingual education
Higher aspirations
Full time education
Career pathways

Figure 9. Themes emerging from interview data

Future vision

The largest group of responses in interviews were aspirational in nature. We specifically asked a question in the round 1 interviews as follows, and this was our opening question.

HOW DO YOU SEE THE FUTURE FOR EDUCATION IN YOUR COMMUNITY? WHAT DO YOU WANT? WHAT IS YOUR VISION INTO THE FUTURE?

> Baleh ngudda yidjare yinan bu yerrika kunmayali kore namudke. njale ngudda yidjare? Njale yibengkan bu yerrika kakarremarnbuyindan kore bedberre wurdurd bu kabirriyidabbolkmen.

It is, therefore, not surprising that this question engaged respondents in a fairly rich conversation about future aspirations for schooling in the homelands. However, other questions we asked were often answered in aspirational terms, expressed as a hope or an expectation of what might be in the future.

There were eight major themes emerging, which we shall briefly discuss. Each of these major themes was supported similarly by locals and non-locals (see Appendix 2. Tabulated results).

RESPONDENTS WANTED TO SEE PARENTS ENGAGED IN CHILDREN'S EDUCATION.

One non-local teacher expressed how they enjoyed having mothers come into her classroom: *"I don't want any parent to think that this space takes away from culture."* Local respondents similarly aspired to see parents at school. One respondent stated: *"Parents need to support children and teachers at school."*

In our second round of interviews, we asked how young mums could be better engaged at school. Responses varied considerably. One non-local suggested a strategy to engage young women (Daluk) *"that aren't coming to school anymore, but they could potentially come back to school helping with even younger kids and that way they are sort of teaching the younger ones but still learning without even noticing it"*. A local suggested we *"need to find ways for employment for mothers in the classroom"*.

Education, though, is not just about what happens at school. With reference to the issue of educational engagement, many locals said that during *"school holidays, we sit with them and teach Bininj knowledge. From their school holidays, they are learning about bush tucker, plants and animals, reptiles"*. Another said: *"Learning starts from your home, from parents, in kunwok when they're little…"*. And another: *"The first teachers are the parents."*

A non-local said: *"Children can benefit from cultural learning from their parents… you can make the curriculum geared to cultural learning out on-Country."*

For locals, the issue wasn't so much about getting parents into the classroom, but about ensuring parents' roles as teachers were affirmed and recognised. Non-local Balanda also recognised the importance of this, but were more concerned about classroom learning and engagement of parents and community members in their classroom. The classroom for Bininj extends beyond the school so parent engagement in education is seen in that context.

RESPONDENTS WERE LOOKING FORWARD TO EMPLOYMENT AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES ON-COUNTRY.

The importance of working on-Country was reflected in many comments from respondents, such as *"it's real work that they [children] look up to"* and *"they will have choice and opportunity in workplaces"* and *"they can learn to get proper jobs… maybe researcher, lawyer or scientist"*. Local respondents saw a clear pathway to the kinds of work that people were doing across the homelands. As we travelled to different homelands we saw examples of Bininj working as rangers, doing construction and building work, fire management, automotive work, office administration, educational support, environmental research work, work with language translation and interpretation. We also observed people doing cultural and creative work, such as painting and weaving.

THERE WAS AN EXPECTATION THAT BININJ AND BALANDA SHOULD WORK TOGETHER.

Both local and non-local Bininj and Balanda strongly supported the need for people to work together. A Balanda said: *"I think obviously all this – the Bininj power, Bininj and Balanda working together – that's really what we want. That's why I came to work… here."* For locals the need to work together was described in terms of a pragmatic approach to learning: *"Balanda can understand our Bininj way and kids can learn like wurrurd, can learn in Balanda way…. even teacher can understand kunwok…"*. Another local said: *"Balanda teachers learn from Bininj teachers and Bininj teachers learn from Balanda."* And similarly: *"Both sides. Yo. Both sides, Balanda people and that, and blackfellas, learn each side, their history to our history."* There was a strong expectation that working together would benefit children: *"Both cultures work together so wurrurd will have that tool, cultures in their learning also when they finish school…. our Indigenous kids, they can, like give them confidence they will know how to make those choices having both cultures in their education."*

None of these comments should be taken to suggest that 'working together' was not happening. Rather, 'working together' was seen as a non-negotiable for the future of homeland education.

RESPONDENTS WANTED TO SEE BININJ IN CONTROL OF EDUCATION.

While 'working together' was seen as an aspiration and a reality, Bininj control and power was seen more as a hope for the future. Balanda expressed it like this:

> We would see Bininj teachers, qualified university trained, alongside Balanda teachers, we would see Bininj in charge of developing curriculum, we would see our children confident reading and writing Kunwinjku and English, we would see children stepping up into responsible positions and power within community and government, within land management to the same extent or more than Balanda.

Bininj saw this as a process addressing past systemic failures: "The previous education system, we didn't see kids graduate. This new way we are still in the process of making decisions for our school." But there was some confidence that Bininj control can and will be achieved: "We are resilient. We are a powerful group. We are going to change those ideologies, in the way that we want to be happening for our children." To some extent, this discourse of power was in response to a perceived failure of the Northern Territory Department of Education, and the pursuit of registration of homeland schools under Nawarddeken Academy across the three homeland sites. The registration process was seen as a struggle for control, as suggested by the following discussion about policy:

> Changing the concept of our policy, ...we want to change the western policy... so our education programs should be recognised. Our law doesn't change, Balanda law always changes. This is why I am asking bureaucrats to see that policy to be adapted to Bininj policy in the mainstream. TheGovernment has got all the money to make decisions for our people.

It was a process of wresting control from Government back to Bininj. The issue of registration for the Mamadawerre and Manmoyi sites was frequently raised throughout the evaluation period, and there was some sense of satisfaction when registration was finally granted in 2021.

RESPONDENTS WANTED TO SEE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ASSISTANT TEACHER TRAINING.

Respondents were keen to see Bininj involved as assistants at school. For that to happen, several commented on the need for training or, as this non-local respondent said, 'capacity building':

> I think one of the most important things for two-way education first is to build a strong foundation for our Bininj staff... capacity for our Bininj staff... so that when we do that planning together, we have that strong understanding of what Bininj want. So step one is capacity building, training here, and maybe Darwin then from there.

Locals were also adamant about the need for more training for Bininj, as this exchange demonstrates.

> [R1] Not only two-way learning for wurrurd, our children, but two-way learning for adults, Bininj teachers need more training.
>
> [R2] Assistant teacher to become a real teacher.
>
> [R1] So they know what they are doing.
>
> [R2] They need more training.

While there was often a blurry line between who is defined as 'teacher' and who is an 'assistant teacher' in the context of school education, there was little doubt in people's minds that the university trained teacher was in 'control' of the classroom and that Bininj staff, while sometimes described as 'teachers' with teaching responsibilities, were not able to take full responsibility for the class.

MANY RESPONDENTS WANTED TO SEE QUALIFIED BININJ TEACHERS IN CLASSROOMS.

Given the above, there were clearly aspirations to see Bininj in classroom teacher roles. Respondents recognised this meant that Bininj had to become university qualified. There was also a recognition among non-locals that Balanda teachers could not do what Bininj teachers do. But locals clearly had in mind that Bininj control (discussed earlier) was not just about governance, but about operational aspects of schooling, including teachers and school leaders.

> Yes, that's the reality that we should want to see – our Bininj teacher becoming professional teacher to draw the line in both western and Bininj [knowledge] but Bininj up there. Because we live and die here; this is our home.

Non-local staff at the school agreed with this sentiment: *"In a sense, we are mentoring ourselves out of a job... I feel lucky to be here but it would be great if the community was here teaching the kids. I think that would be ideal."* What was not clear was a sense of how this might be achieved, a question we posed directly in our second-round interviews, for which we gained no clear direction.

ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL WAS IDENTIFIED AS A PRIORITY FOR CHILDREN.

There were several aspects to this aspiration and it was not only an issue of children turning up at school every day. In part 'attendance' was identified as a constraint for funding, and this was a message they had heard from the Department of Education: *"Gunbalanya always say our Government said our school won't give you an education if you don't have that attendance. If you do have a good number we will give you an education in your own country."* In other words, attendance is about the numbers, the need for a critical mass of students to make Government models of homeland education viable. Some respondents were acutely aware that funding for public schools, such as Gunbalanya, was tied to attendance, and they had seen or heard about falling attendance at the school. However, they were also concerned that the Government homeland schooling model did not give children the opportunity to attend five days per week.

THERE WAS A RECOGNITION THAT FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE ACADEMY WAS CRITICAL FOR ITS SUSTAINABILITY

There was a general awareness among all people we talked to that there is a significant cost to doing education well in homelands. People were keen to see the Academy develop over time and to see resources come in to ensure that it was adequately supported, not just for the day-to-day running, but for the kind of capacity building discussed earlier, including teacher training, as this local respondent said: *"We like to see it, homeland school. More support. More support. We want the teachers to be trained up."* Similarly, a non-local Warddeken Land Management worker said: *"I think they have a right to be educated where they want to live... to do that [Nawarddeken Academy] is going to have to be strong, well-funded, well governed and grow steadily."* And another non-local respondent said: *"The government has to be committed to it, see the value in it, and be prepared to back it and see it as a work in progress and see how it goes, instead of saying it failed."*

RESPONDENTS RECOGNISED THE ROLES OF ELDERS IN INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING

Comments from mostly local respondents (see Table 5, Appendix 2) supported the role that Elders play in intergenerational knowledge transmission. This includes their roles in teaching outside of school. For example, one local respondent said: *"I support that country, like me, I support my grandfather, my grandma and they taught me, this is the way education should be. I respect old people when they telling me to do things, I respect the way I was taught."* Others reminded us of the important cosmological role Elders play in education: *"Kids going learning on-Country and elderly people can go with them, so the young kids need to learn how to call ancestors."* Elders also have a role in supporting parents of children with their knowledge: *"We should share that education with their parents, like how we started. Like old people they showed us everything. Learning on-Country, cultural activities and knowledge, and live as a happy and safe life."* It is important to recognise that the education discussed here is not seen as somehow separated from education that happens in schools, rather it is integrated with other learning as a non-negotiable space for learning on-Country.

RESPONDENTS WANTED TO SEE A BININJ CURRICULUM DEVELOPED

Comments from mostly non-local respondents (see Table 5, Appendix 2) suggested the need for a Bininj curriculum. For non-local staff at the school, curriculum is used to guide and organise teaching and learning, so when non-local staff talk about Bininj curriculum, they have this in mind. It provides a distinct framework for the Balanda teachers that is a point of differentiation from the Australian curriculum.

> I think the big issue that goes along with this is local curriculum, local curriculum development, so apart from the issues of having Bininj teachers it's actually developing the curriculum with the community, with the Bininj teachers there now, who work with us.

For locals, the need for a Bininj curriculum was about ensuring that local learning needs were prioritised, as opposed to the Government's priorities: *"[The curriculum] it doesn't fit to all Indigenous people, some here in the top end we have different ways."*

MINOR THEMES

An array of minor themes also emerged from the interviews. The idea that in the future, Bininj students could '**walk in two worlds**' was raised several times, though mostly by non-locals. What this actually means wasn't clear, but probably reflects an often-stated goal of remote education, that is in reality hard to achieve. Indeed, we talked to some young people who had been away to boarding school and spoke and read English very well, but struggled to find a place in their culture, and vice versa we saw examples of young men who were confident in their culture, but not so confident with English or western culture.

Another frequently discussed theme related to '**bilingual education**'. Again, there was little clarity about what this means, except that the end result would be Bininj confident and literate in both English and Kunwinjku. The idea of '**higher aspirations**' was raised in relation to expectations that people could be whatever non-local people were, with university training and professional qualifications. The need for '**full-time education**' was raised mostly by local respondents, and this is a reference to the perceived shortcomings of education offered by the Department of Education at Mamadawerre and Manmoyi. While aspirations for employment and higher education (as discussed earlier) were often raised, some respondents recognised that there was a need for career pathways — that is, a clear way for young people to achieve their goals.

Homeland schooling

We asked respondents to comment on what they thought homeland schooling should look like and what children should be taught.

> Yiddok ngad karribidyikarrmerren bu kulhkenh kadberre wurdurdken? Yiddok makka mankarrewoyhbuk?

We specifically asked what they thought about two-way learning. Perhaps not surprisingly, most respondents spoke favourably about the benefits of homeland schooling, but as we also show in this section, they were aware of some challenges.

RESPONDENTS RECOGNISED THE BENEFIT OF LEARNING BOTH WAYS

For many respondents, homeland schooling created a space for both ways or two-way learning. Generally, what they meant by this was a focus on both Bininj and Balanda cultures and of Kunwinjku and English, of Bininj knowledge (kunmayali) and Western knowledge. Local and non-local respondents were in agreement with this approach. For example, one non-local said:

> The whole point is its two ways. Some are just in Kunwinjku, not English. I think that is going to be a big achievement for the school because it is working towards the bilingual stuff, the language stuff and cultural maintenance stuf. I have seen that as a positive thing that's happened.

Confirming this, a local respondent said everyone was on board with the two-way approach: *"We are all travelling in the same pathways, this two-way education. It's pretty broad and big when you think of that two-way education."*

The practical outworking of this position should be seen in all aspects of education, including curriculum. For example, one local respondent said: *"They can put two-ways curriculum in Bininj way and Balanda... written documents, curriculum."* And from a pedagogical perspective: *"Even [Balanda] teachers can understand Bininj kunwok [language] and our Balanda teachers can understand our way, Bininj ways."* For other locals, the ideal of two-way learning was simply put: *"It's good for kids to learn our way and Balanda way."*

RESPONDENTS ACKNOWLEDGED THE BENEFIT OF LEARNING ON AND FROM COUNTRY

The benefits of on-Country learning were expressed by local and non-local respondents in several ways. For example, one non-local grasped something of the significance of these on-Country learning interactions:

> When [local man] came and did that bark it wasn't just one day, it was a process of multiple days... when we were going out with [local Elder]... she was sharing. The ladies were coming ou,t the kids were only a few of them but the way they were talking about things after... we went to Kunjelongjelom, the rock art site, and we walked in and there was a lady who had come for an arts workshop and was stuck here, [we] had one young person say welcome to the city of our old people when they were going around, and they were talking about, we are bush kids... we are from here, we are always bush kids, just hearing how kids are really valuing.

For local respondents, the significance of on-Country learning ran deep, For example, the following excerpt from a local Elder described education on-Country in the context of colonised Australia:

> We are new country in Australia where we have been colonised, the colonisation that put us into that western thinking of education... we here, [it's] someone else's Country we need to start thinking how we can work with, how we can put that education within this Country.

For others the issues were more pragmatic (hunting and fishing) and at the same time existentially ontological (kids related to Country) and cosmological (old people hear their voices).

> maybe hunting or fishing...Take old people, teach young kids how to cook, look for sugar bag, name of the native plant and animal. Country, how the kids related to country, maybe great grandparents, how to call out to ancestors of the land. So old people can hear their voices, they might say these are our future generations come to see this place.

RESPONDENTS RECOGNISED THE BENEFIT OF BININJ KNOWLEDGE (KUNMAYALI)

For many local respondents, Bininj knowledge was a non-negotiable in education: *"We want to see our education traditional knowledge being taken first... our first education."* This goes beyond issues of literacy and numeracy, but to the deeper understanding of 'respectful' ways in relationships. One senior local respondent commented on the importance of 'Balanda education' before explaining how much more important Bininj knowledge is:

> They get graduated, they get Balanda education, but now they need more Bininj knowledge. They can talk and write Kunwinjku, but they need respectable ways, to respect like sons-in-law, the complicated ones, sometimes they don't understand. They only know easy ones, they call out to their poison cousins, but they don't understand.

Overall, the issue of Bininj knowledge was primarily one for local respondents more than non-locals (see Table 6, Appendix 2).

RESPONDENTS RECOGNISED THE BENEFIT OF FIRST LANGUAGE (KUNWOK)

Non-locals and locals were agreed on the importance of learning first language. However, some feelings of inadequacy were expressed by non-local school staff that first language literacy needs to be supported by more Bininj or, at least, in collaboration with Bininj:

> We asked the kids to use kunwok and share kunwok and we try to incorporate it to the extent it's appropriate for us to use, but in an ideal world you would be planning more together, you would be working more together.

Kunwok is 'language', and not necessarily indicative of literacy. So local respondents did not always discuss Kunwinjku literacy in relation to this. For example: *"We want our kids to learn in kunwok first, like Bininj way first then later maybe in Balanda way and also — just thinking."* There were a lot of aspirational statements about this issue, and we observed few people who felt comfortable reading or writing kunwok. This was recognised as a concern for some local people; for example, this respondent described the aspiration of writing Bininj kunwok:

> In the school, we want to see kids writing Bininj kunwok and Balanda. For me, I can't write Bininj kunwok, I only speak Kunwinjku. We all same but we want to see our kids be able to write both Bininj kunwok and Balanda kunwok. Right now they just writing Balanda language but today it's time to be strong to have kunwok written down. How to write our own language. Adults and children able to write. That's what I want to see.

RESPONDENTS RECOGNISED THE PRIORITY OF RESPECT FOR CULTURE

While everyone we spoke to thought education was fundamentally important for young people, there was a view expressed by many that 'respect for culture' must take precedence. For example, one local respondent said: *"We can't say this is education and its got to fit for you; what it's got to be is this is our culture, education has got to fit for us."*

While noting this, it is important to recognise that local people did not compartmentalise the priorities of homeland education as we have done in this analysis. Rather issues related to language, both ways, culture, knowledge and learning on-Country were all intertwined. This sentiment is captured in the following lengthy explanation from a local respondent:

> ...education... for now [and] for future... that what we call future yerrikah,... but Bininj kunmayali, I think its number 1 first important for wurrurd... Balanda on top but Bininj first... teach to respect culture to respect our feeling... they are part of the learning... but really number 1 is their own language, Bininj first because you are a Bininj person and our wurrurd are Bininj kids... I think education really good, we like to see homeland school [give] more support, more support, we want the teachers to be trained up and wurrurd, then more learning both ways.

RESPONDENTS RECOGNISED THE CHALLENGES OF WORKING TOGETHER IN PARTNERSHIP

For much of the time we spent working on the evaluation, the Academy was working under an MoU with Gunbalanya school pending registration of the Kabulwarnamyo site. There was some tension/distrust in this 'partnership', and this was reflected in many comments from respondents. For example: *"Gunbalanya School won't listen to all the Bininj, what they want — the achievement for their wurrurd."* This sentiment extended to the Department of Education (discussed next) and other potential partners who may have had an interest in education, such as boarding schools and Children's Ground, an organisation running programs at another nearby outstation. For example, one local respondent said: *"Rather than community or boarding... we want our wurrurd like here, and Manmoyi and Mamadawerre, so the families can see improvement."* And another: *"I want the kids to stay here. (Mamadawerre) If young kids they want to go boarding schools, there are lots of distractions, families. It's better to do a boarding school in homeland. Secondary and middle school."* Further, while the Academy is in many ways a product of Warddeken Land Management, there was little discussion in our interviews about how the two organisations should work together.

The above should not be taken as a lack of willingness to engage with partners. Rather, it reflects what appears to be a cautious approach built on the challenges of working together with external organisations who might challenge the Bininj first priority that exists in the homelands.

RESPONDENTS WERE FRUSTRATED BY GOVERNMENTS' ROLE IN HOMELANDS

Local respondents recognised the role of governments as funding sources, but as noted by the following local respondent, there is some wariness about the strings attached to funding:

> So it... is very important to educate our education department to understand our needs for our education... there is a reason when they give us money for our school and money for our homeland, government not giving us free money, we are learning this process through western systems.

And for another local there was a wariness of the power and control governments exert: *"This is why I am asking bureaucrats to see that policy [should] be adapted to Bininj policy in the mainstream. The Government has got all the money to make decisions for our people."*

For some, there was a desire for Bininj to prove themselves to government — to be heard in the mainstream: *"We looking at our kids in reality we trying to put Bininj education so that government can see what's happening on the ground with the grassroots people and our voice needs to be heard in the mainstream."*

The wariness expressed about governments is in part a response to the historical changes in policy for homelands, which have seen resourcing put into and then taken away from homelands. It was also a response to the slow process from the Department in granting registration to the Academy for all sites.

MINOR THEMES

Three minor themes emerge from the data, all related to challenges in the homelands. The first relates to access to **technology and internet**, which was seen as a significant obstacle for some people, not only in terms of educational opportunities presented by technology but for basic communications. We observed the difficulty experienced during board meetings when people joined in by teleconference. We also noted the challenges associated with finding people on the homelands where there was no mobile phone coverage. The second challenge relates to finding **work experience** opportunities for young people. While the Academy is registered to provide education for young people up to Year 7, there is a two or three-year gap between the end of Year 7 and when students can realistically take up work experience and formal training opportunities that would otherwise be available to students in the senior years. It is not surprising that the third minor theme is related to this issue: creating more on-Country **secondary activities for young people** who have finished their primary education. For some, the obvious solution was working alongside rangers while for others, boarding off-Country was considered an option, though with caveats about staying connected to Country.

Supporting young Bininj in a changing world

Our last question in round 1 interviews asked how the Academy could support young people in a changing world.

> Baleh bu ngad ngarrbenbidyikarrme wurdurd ngarrku bu mahni mankarre kakarreborlehborledme?

We originally formulated this question with issues such as climate change in mind and its direct impact on the homeland communities of the Warddeken Indigenous Protected Area. However, as other issues emerged, such as Black Lives Matter and covid-19, the relevance of this question took on fresh significance.

RESPONDENTS FELT THAT TEACHING YOUNG BININJ VALUES WAS IMPORTANT

Rather than teaching skills, local respondents – more so than non-local respondents – saw a need to impart Bininj values to young people. One respondent put this in terms of 'good and bad, right and wrong': *"To see these other kids, the next generation coming up, the other wurrurd kids we like to see them they see the things around them good and bad, what is right and wrong it is something they need… ."* Coupled with this was the need for an understanding about racism: *"That racism is a bad thing, our kids need to understand that."*

The issue of values also came through in response to the question we posed: 'What do you think children should be learning about and how should they learn?' For example, one local respondent described 'culture learning': *"That's really important it should be number, culture learning, because kids need to learn what's right and wrong, what's bad, what's good, what's dangerous."* In another group discussion based on the same question, locals talked about getting the 'right' story': *"And getting right story. Right education. Not rubbish things."* What is implied by 'right' is a set of values that underpin education.

RESPONDENTS SAW OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO LEARN AND WORK ON-COUNTRY

Another strong theme emerged mainly from non-local respondents about the need to learn and work on-Country. One local respondent said: *"We understand that kids need an opportunity to learn more, staying on homelands."* One of the non-local Warddeken Land Management workers we spoke to reeled off a number of names of people who had benefited from their work on-Country—the range of skills they had learned and the satisfaction they had gained from working as a ranger. He said: *"We do everything ourselves – we fix our own vehicles, we build our own accommodation. It's more than just fix our own roads."* Another non-local spoke about 'opportunity': *"Learning to give people the opportunity to be who and where they want to be at whatever stage in life they are at. Not everyone will take it, but they've got the opportunity".*

MINOR THEMES

Two additional minor themes emerged from interviews. The first is described as **supporting wurrurd**, mostly from local respondents. What this means was seldom unpacked, but in general respondents described working together, as expressed here by a local:

> We adults, we need to focus on kids. We get together, we need to fix… fix ourselves first. Fix, heal, organise, whole lot of us, support each other to support our kids. Adults need to support each other to support our kids.

The second minor theme is related to the idea of Bininj values, discussed earlier, and which we have summarised as **Bininj making strong choices**. In other words, the strong choices that Bininj make (as parents and community members) instils values in young people. This idea was summarised well by a local respondent:

> It's very important for our… wurrurd, to value [schooling], but it has to come from the community, Bininj way, how we value education for our kids… like give them confidence they will know how to make those choices having both cultures in their education.

Purpose of school

On the surface, a question we asked about the purpose of school sounded fairly simple, but respondents reflected deeply to respond.

Njaleken ngad karridjare kulhkenh?

The first response was often that school was for 'learning', but as we prompted further, there was clearly more to school than this.

RESPONDENTS SAW A PURPOSE FOR SCHOOL SUPPORTING BININJ ONTOLOGIES AND COSMOLOGIES

One of the key themes emerging from the question about the purpose of school relates to what we have labelled as Bininj ontology and cosmology. By this we refer to schooling as a vehicle for maintaining and strengthening Bininj identities, realities and connections with ancestors and their Country/world. For example, one local respondent summarised their view: *"We need our children to learn who they are. Our kids need to learn the landscape here where we are, they need to learn about their kinship their moiety and all that."* For another local: *"It's about our culture, our law, it's talking about our business. At this moment like we talking about our business and law from the ancestors and old people, great, great, great grandfather"*.

Non-locals tended to agree. For example, one non-local said:

> I think it's for children to understand their environment, understand their country, understand the stories about their Country, so they can travel over their Country and walk though it knowing what's there and how it all fits together and understanding their ancestors and what they did and how their Country came into being.

RESPONDENTS WANTED TO SEE SCHOOL CONTRIBUTE TO DEVELOPING STRONG, CONFIDENT WURRURD

Many local respondents (more than non-locals) talked about the need to build strong young people. For example, one local respondent said: *"When they grow up, they learn to be strong and to keep the knowledge strong and keep the knowledge in both ways."* And another: *"We want to encourage our kids to be strong and confident. For the things coming, challenges. To be brave and get ready."* A non-local respondent put it this way:

> I would say why the Academy is so important and that is to be a strong and powerful person in the world going forwards. People are going to need a good education so they can fight for their people, their Country in the future, and knowing as much as you can know about everything from your own culture and from western education as well, makes people strong.

RESPONDENTS IDENTIFIED THE NEED FOR SCHOOL TO BUILD LITERACY AND NUMERACY SKILLS

Literacy and numeracy skills were seen as essential for children One local respondent said: *"Education... will... give us understanding, give us knowledge of how to do the numbers, understanding how to read papers apart from our own language."* Others connected these skills to future work opportunities: *"Like learning [for] wurrurd it's very important for learning, reading, writing and maths... [for] wurrurd [to be] very strong... they will have choice and opportunity for wurrurd in workplaces."* For some, literacy was also about Kunwinjku literacy: *"Sometime when we write in English versions we can sit and see what has been written then maybe we can sit and write in Bininj kunwok. Written kunwok so it makes sense."* There was broad agreement with this sentiment from many non-locals – for example: *"I think if you want jobs you need to have basic literacy in English as well as Kunwinjku, be able to understand the Balanda world but in your own terms."*

MINOR THEMES

Apart from **'learning'**, which was not fully defined by respondents, a key purpose identified by non-locals (and not by locals) was to support young people to be **'successful'**. What people meant by this was seldom articulated. For example, one staff member associated with the Academy said: *"Education from our standpoint is the point where you can start to bring people into successful futures."* Another described success in a somewhat circular way: *"So, the purpose of this school is so that these kids can be successful in their lives to contribute to society the best way they can, whichever way they choose to – that's success, that's the purpose."* The lack of discussion from Bininj about this idea of success prompted us to ask community members about 'success stories' in our round 2 interviews. These are discussed further below.

Supporting mobility

Respondents struggled to offer answers to the question we asked about mobility: How do we work with students that are moving around?

Baleh ngarrbenyimowon nawu wurdurdken kabirriwohrewohre?

They did recognise it as a problem for schooling, but they found it hard to articulate a solution. There were, however, several suggestions, which are shown at Table 9 (See Appendix 2). Two minor themes emerged from our interviews.

MINOR THEMES

For some mobility supported the development of **cultural knowledge**. One local respondent described it in this way: *"For things like funerals and ceremony, in my thinking that's all part of the learning experience."* Another saw mobility as supporting traditional learning processes: *"Like old people they showed us everything. Like how they did for us, they showed us everything. Learning on-Country, cultural activities and knowledge, and live as a happy and safe life."* Similarly, others saw mobility as an opportunity to support traditional teaching and learning practices:

> Teaching them about how to make the bark, how to flatten it, how to write a story on that bark, the story doesn't have words, just picture, we would take them camping tell 'em the stories about those paintings, and they would try to learn about those paintings, before it didn't have words it had image of story, in the image there are words.

These views do not necessarily see mobility as a problem to be fixed, but as a non-negotiable part of Bininj life that should be embraced by educative processes.

The second solution revolved around the idea of a **mobile school**. For example, one local respondent said: *"Maningrida had a mobile school. We need to start thinking about mobile school as well."* Others saw this as a practical solution — school follows people around: *"Funeral place so they can do their mobile school. That school will follow them wherever they go, that teacher during the day."* While this idea was embraced fairly widely among local respondents, how this would or could work was not fully discussed. As we moved toward the end of the evaluation period there was increasing discussion about the benefit of having three campuses in each of the homelands, so that children who moved with their families across the homelands could connect in with the local campus. The challenge of moving in and out of the homelands to Gunbalanya and Darwin, for example, remained unresolved.

Success stories

In our first round of interviews, we did not ask specifically about what success looks like, but non-locals in particular saw that school was about supporting young people to be successful. They did not define what that meant, so in our second round of interviews we wanted to explore what success stories might look like. Table 10 (Appendix 2) summarises the responses we obtained but mostly these were not tangible pictures.

Njale yawurrinj dja yawkyawk kunmayali kamakmen kamurrngrayekwon kanmarnemulewan bu kakarrerayek

Yiyimen njale yibekan bu ngunmurrngrayekwon kore kunmayali?

Njale kunmayali ngunmurrngrayekwon?

Njale ngunmarnbun yimayaliburlumerren?

Njale kamarnbun kamurrngrayekwon manbu kurlken kore yawurrinj yawkyawk?

Njale yidjare yinan kore kurlken Nawadekken kunred? Yawurrinj yawkyawk nawa birribalyawkimuk kabolkyimerren?

Njale kab yibenbidyikarrme nawa yawurrinj yawkyawk birribalyawkimuk kabirridjalni bu kabirribolme?

MINOR THEMES

The strongest theme that emerged here was about **feeling proud** of the young person. The stories of pride were mostly related to seeing the young person beyond school, working on-Country. For example, one homeland community member described pride as a story that carried on through generations:

> When he is all grown up, he would be able to stand and say I understand now, he won't be sad person anymore, he would be proud and belong to that story. He is the future for that story, he will carry that story till he has got his own kids and he will give that story to his kids because that's where the story belongs, where the kids grew up, he is the same person to that person, whoever was in that story it was him, he is like that story.

Another non-local Warddeken worker saw pride directly reflected in work done by young people, for example fighting fires:

> But anywhere fighting fires is not fun and up here people told us before we started this a long time ago, they told us it was impossible, it couldn't be done, and we did it and never had problems finding people to do it and I said how come you want to do this job? And they said, Kojok it's like winning the grand finals when we are done.

Others talked about the pride associated with graduation: *"I think maybe one of my sons, when he grow up, I gonna be proud of him to graduate him... he is still at school."* For others, pride was seen in the respect a young person shows for his Elders: *"Our culture respect him and listen to the Elders' people, showing they giving us more knowledge to be proud of them to respect the [Elders], because they the ones passing on to us. giving us more knowledge more skills and more training."* Another respondent saw pride in 'achievement' living on homelands:

> ...it is good opportunity for both cultures to come together and I would love to see that for my children for my Indigenous family on homeland and on community to achieve the best dream for them to live on homeland or community, it is very valuable for kids to accept their achievement, mum will be proud of seeing that for homeland here.

Figure 10. Early Childhood area at Kabulwarnamyo

RESPONSE TO THE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

In this section we respond to the evaluation questions posed in the framework (See Evaluation questions, page 20).

Our responses to these questions arise out of the findings and where possible we connect these responses back to our findings and relevant literature discussed earlier in this report. Evaluation is in part about making assessments or judgements, so for each point, we attempt to make an assessment about the strength of outcomes achieved. These are not intended to indicate success or failure, but they point to where strategic planning for the future could translate into improvements. For each point we use a five star rating, where five stars indicates very strong results and one star suggests that considerably more work needs to be done.

HOW WELL IS THIS BEING ACHIEVED?

★★★★★	Very strong results
★★★★	Strong results but with some room for improvement
★★★	Good progress towards stronger outcomes is evident
★★	Several opportunities for improvement
★	Considerably more work needs to be done

To assist the reader to quickly identify priority areas for strategic planning we have sorted the points raised in order of stars received at Appendix 3.

How does the Academy engage young people in learning?

In response to this question we are more concerned about what makes the Academy different from other schools. As a registered independent school in the Northern Territory, Nawarddeken Academy must comply with the requirements of the Education Act (Northern Territory) and as a recipient of Australian Government funds, the Academy must comply with a range of compliance and reporting obligations.

From the perspective of our respondents, the importance of Nawarddeken Academy as a homeland school is reflected in their belief in the importance of learning on-Country, with a Bininj first and both-ways approach. Also reflected in this belief is a view that Balanda teachers should respect Bininj language and culture and do all they can to learn from Bininj. The interviews suggested that they were doing this.

ON-COUNTRY LEARNING EXPERIENCES: COUNTRY AS CLASSROOM. COUNTRY AS TEACHER.

The evidence we have heard and seen suggests that Nawarddeken Academy offers a learning experience for young Bininj that is not only on-Country, but which engages Country pedagogically. This is consistent with approaches now well recognised in the literature (Bawaka Country et al., 2016; Coff, 2021; Fogarty, 2013; Poelina et al., 2020; Van Gelderen & Guthadjaka, 2019). This engages young Bininj through their ancient (cosmological) relationships with Country and ancestors and supports their identity (ontological) as belonging to their ancestral estates and imparts knowledge (epistemological) beyond the human pedagogical interactions between teacher and student. In practical terms, we have seen this expressed through learning activities conducted outside the formal Academy classroom.

HOW WELL IS THIS BEING ACHIEVED?

★★★★★

INCORPORATION OF LOCAL CURRICULUM PRIORITIES (E.G. SEASONAL CALENDAR)

There has been an intentional effort to incorporate local curriculum priorities into teaching and learning. This is reflected in the development of a seasonal calendar as a framework for introducing local curriculum priorities and is consistent with contextually and culturally responsive approaches we have seen elsewhere in the literature (Disbray & Martin, 2017; Guenther et al., 2016a; Osborne et al., 2014). The calendar provides 'a structure for linking the Australian and NT Indigenous Language and Cultural curriculums with the local seasons and environment' (Nawarddeken Academy Limited, 2021, p. 16) and follows on from a significant curriculum mapping exercise represented at Figure 11 towards the creation of the calendar shown in Figure 12. There is, of course, more to be done, but we feel that strong progress has been made towards incorporation of local curriculum priorities in teaching and learning at the Academy.

HOW WELL IS THIS BEING ACHIEVED?

★★★★

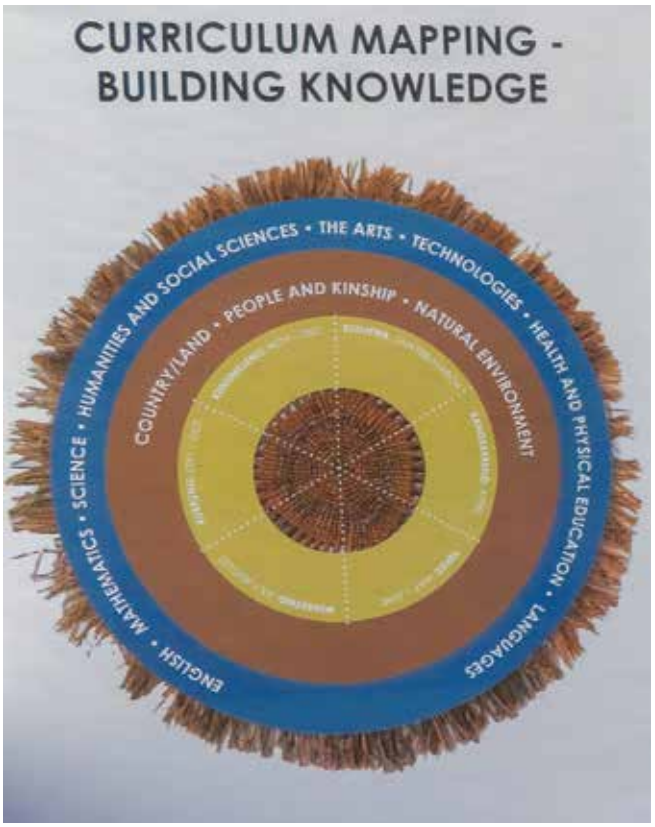


Figure 11. Curriculum Mapping framework

Figure 12. Approval of the Seasonal Calendar draft

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

While engaging Bininj as assistants in classroom teaching has at times been challenging, the engagement of community in learning activities more generally has been strong. This is reflected in the high numbers of Bininj staff employed at the school (see Background: Establishment and development of Nawarddeken Academy, page 7). We heard of Elder and family involvement in bush trips and camps, in bark painting, music, and in curriculum development/mapping workshops. Further, community members from all three homeland centres are actively engaged in governance (providing vision and leadership) and in curriculum planning – for example, the development of the seasonal calendar.

HOW WELL IS THIS BEING ACHIEVED?

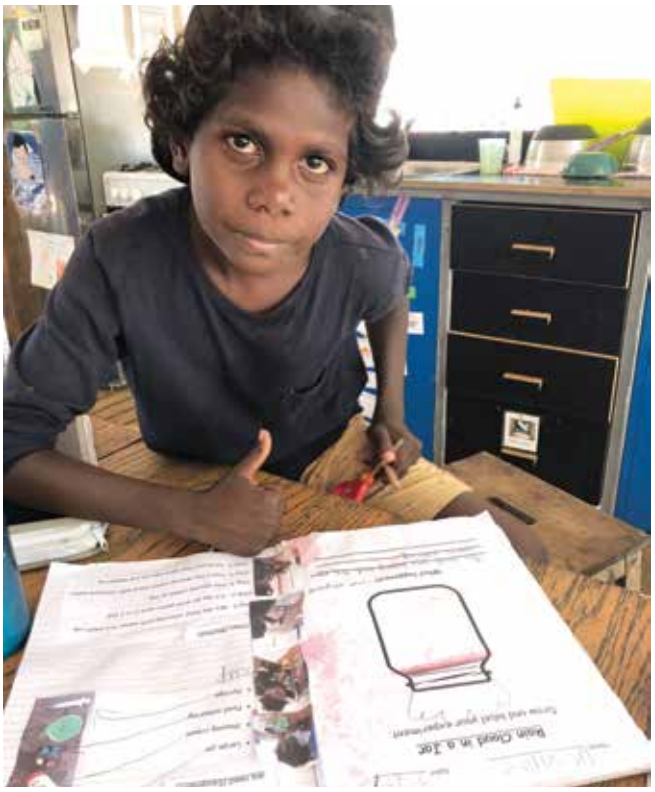
★★★★★

LEARNING 'BOTH-WAYS' (BALANDA AND BININJ)

We observed a strong commitment to two way or both-ways learning among local and non-local stakeholders. While to some extent this is an aspirational commitment, and perhaps reflects a historical expectation going back to the 1970s and 1980s, as discussed earlier in the literature (e.g. Marika-Mununggiritj, 1990; Munyarryun, 1976), it is fair to say that respondents believed that Nawarddeken Academy's teaching and learning processes, its governance and its philosophy all reflect the reality of that aspiration, at least to some extent, now. It was reflected in their views about the benefits of homeland schooling (as a site for both-ways learning), in the vision of Balanda and Bininj working together, and in an expectation that students should be able to walk in two worlds. We conclude from these findings that the Academy and the people living in the Warddeken homelands are strongly committed to the ideal. However, the legislative, professional standards, curriculum, assessment and funding frameworks that any school operates within means that to a large extent the system will stymie attempts to develop full expressions of both-ways education.

HOW WELL IS THIS BEING ACHIEVED?

★★★★★



How does the Academy support young people's values and aspirations (and their parents) for their future?

In response to this question, we first acknowledge that we did not ask many young people what they thought their aspirations and values were. Those we did ask were reluctant to provide a lot of detail. However, we have a clear view of what parents and community members' values and aspirations for young people are.

Among respondents, there was a strong belief in the need for supporting young people in their learning and, more specifically, to provide a strong moral and ethical foundation for them so they could make good choices in the future. They gave every indication that this was being achieved by the Academy. It is reflected in the leadership of the school at a board level and also in the support offered by Elders. Those values and aspirations are centred on the primacy of Bininj culture, language and knowledge, and the importance of learning on-Country, with a view to later working on-Country. There is a strong connection to the work of Warddeken Land Management, which creates opportunities for students to engage with workers (who are also parents) and take part in on-Country work-related activities.

BININJ KUNMAYALI (EPISTEMOLOGIES) KNOWLEDGE

Local respondents spoke strongly in support of applying Bininj kunmayali (knowledge) in the context of homeland schooling. This is to a large extent facilitated through learning that occurs on-Country. It is clear that students were learning to 'read' Country (Harrison & Skrebneva, 2020) as part of their lives on-Country. It is also clear that in terms of their future aspirations (or at least the aspirations that their parents and Elders had for them) that students in the Academy were constantly exposed to seeing people work on-Country as rangers and in other roles, where Bininj kunmayali was integrated into work. Balanda teachers were also clearly endeavouring to bring that knowledge into the classroom, and the introduction of the seasonal calendar for curriculum purposes is another sign that progress is being made. However, Balanda teachers can only take this so far and the constraints of education systems mean that western knowledge will likely continue to dominate the educational landscape in the homelands despite Bininj aspirations. There are cultural constraints that limit what can be taught at school; for example, certain knowledge is prohibited from sharing to certain people, and often stories can only be shared from men to boys and from women to girls. We note, however, that parents play a vital role as first teachers in educating their children at home and this, of course, complements what the school is doing.

HOW WELL IS THIS BEING ACHIEVED?

★★★★★

LANGUAGE (KUNWOK)

Language is, of course, fundamentally important for expressing concepts in any knowledge system. The Academy is creating opportunities for kunwok to be used and learned in day-to-day schooling activities. Local and non-local respondents saw 'kunwok' as a priority for homeland schooling and recognised this as a benefit for student learning (see page 33). However, Balanda teachers are limited in their capacity to teach kunwok because they are language learners themselves — indeed, there was some discussion about the need for non-formal language classes after school hours to support Balanda language learning. There are opportunities to more intentionally teach Kunwinjku (or local dialects) and there is support in the Australian curriculum (ACARA, 2017) and the Northern Territory Indigenous Languages and Cultures framework (Department of Education, 2018) to progress this. But it is dependent on the support of local language experts. We will return to this later in the report.

HOW WELL IS THIS BEING ACHIEVED?

★★★

STRONG GOVERNANCE AND LOCAL LEADERSHIP

The strength of Bininj leadership in education is reflected in the governance of the Academy. Young people can see role models of Elders and leaders who are championing the cause of homeland learning, and who are providing direction for future learning. Our team of community researchers was made up of people who are passionate about education and learning and who are committed to realising their aspirations for homeland learning. There is no shortage of senior people who are willing to support the Academy's students through governance and leadership, though these same people are pulled in a variety of directions and there is a risk that without time for leadership succession planning, there will be an emerging capacity gap in coming years. Nevertheless, for now the strength of local leadership supports young people in their future aspirations.

HOW WELL IS THIS BEING ACHIEVED?

★★★★

ELDER INVOLVEMENT AND INTERGENERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE TRANSMISSION

Local respondents believed that the contribution of Elders was foundational for transmission of Bininj knowledge for the future benefit of wurrurd (children) (see discussion on page 30). From our observations and interviews with Elders it is clear that they are providing strong leadership and direction for the school and homeland centres, which support aspirations for cultural maintenance. The Eldership role is foundational for the achievement of Bininj aspirations for young people.

HOW WELL IS THIS BEING ACHIEVED?

★★★★★

RESPECTING CULTURE

On-Country schooling creates opportunities to connect directly with culture in a variety of ways. Respondents spoke of the need to keep Bininj culture as a priority for children's education, whether in or out of school (see page 33). Local respondents recognised the important role that parents play in maintaining culture, but they also wanted to see culture built into the learning activities of school. The Academy builds cultural activities into learning in and outside the classroom. This is expressed in activities such as bark painting, camps and bush trips, and music, and indirectly through support for activities such as curriculum mapping. Respect for culture also arose in our discussions with respondents about how to support mobility. It is apparent that the learning that happens during ceremonies and funerals is seen as important for Bininj. For non-local staff at the school there is an acceptance that these are important sites of cultural learning for young people.

HOW WELL IS THIS BEING ACHIEVED?

★★★★★

AFFIRMING BININJ IDENTITIES AND BUILDING CONFIDENCE (ONTOLOGIES)

We observed children who were clearly confident and strong as young Bininj learners. In part, this is a product of the school being located on-Country, but in part it is a product of the learning activities they engage with, and being surrounded and supported by older role models who are living and working on-Country.

HOW WELL IS THIS BEING ACHIEVED?

★★★★★

CONNECTING TO COUNTRY AND ANCESTORS (COSMOLOGIES)

Being on-Country allows the Academy to connect directly with the cosmology of place. We heard many accounts of children engaging with their Country and their ancestors in the context of bush trips and particularly with rock art sites. That said, there is room for expanding the learning that comes from Country with, for example, more Country visits and bushwalks.

HOW WELL IS THIS BEING ACHIEVED?

★★★★

SUPPORTING BININJ VALUES (AXIOLOGIES)

Respondents saw learning of Bininj values as just as (if not more) important as literacy and numeracy. And while the Academy does not necessarily teach Bininj values (and this is similarly seen to be the function of families) its engagement with, and support of, culture, necessarily affirms Bininj cultural values.

HOW WELL IS THIS BEING ACHIEVED?

★★★★★

How can the Academy work effectively with the families/community/ Warddeken to ensure that its hopes and expectations are fully met?

Before responding to this question it is important to recognise that hopes and expectations have and will continue to change over time. For example, the 'hope' of full-time education available to primary aged children across the Warddeken IPA was a pressing issue for much of the evaluation period and that has now been fully realised. However, as time progresses we could expect to see expectations grow to include secondary provision. Our response to this question is, therefore, somewhat conditional on the contemporary context.

One of the positive outcomes of the evaluation work carried out by the community-based researchers is that it is creating a space for conversations to take place about what education means, what it is for and how it should be delivered. In many cases, the initial response we received to the questions we asked suggested that community members had never been challenged to think about the issues we raised. And for some, the first response was one they had clearly heard from somewhere else, but was not from their own thinking. The other observation we can make is that the team of community-based researchers are now much more adept at asking these questions and have thought through many of the deeper issues that underpin the questions. Our community-based researchers, therefore, can continue to play an important role in raising questions and engaging Bininj in discussions about their aspirations and how to achieve them.

RECRUITMENT OF BININJ STAFF

We heard a strong and consistent message from local and non-local respondents about the need for employment pathways for Bininj, for assistant teacher recruitment and training, and for Bininj teachers more generally. While there was general agreement about these needs there seemed to be a challenge in finding people who were willing to take on school-based roles. While the pipeline for people moving into ranger work (and land/ fire management work more generally) is well established, the pipeline is not well established for work in schools. There are a few approaches that may work to assist the pipeline of potential workers in schools.

1. Encourage more young adults and teenagers to take up school-based positions.
2. Create a bigger pool of casual workers who are available for work.
3. Offer paid positions to young mothers to work as family liaison officers or family educators similar to the way that Families as First Teachers (FaFT) works in many remote communities.
4. Offer soft-entry work opportunities where payment is available for targeted activities or programs in the way that other programs work in remote communities (see for example Guenther, 2011; Guenther 2020).
5. Couple employment opportunities with training opportunities.

There are limitations with any of these suggestions and what works may emerge from some experimentation. First, we recognise that in terms of available young people, the homeland pool does not include many senior school completers (who may have completed year 11 and 12 at Gunbalanya or at boarding schools). Secondly, the pool of potential employees from homelands is small and is already well used through casual work. Third, the impact of adult mobility and different work priorities further limits the potential for increasing the pool of workers. Nevertheless, if the aspiration for Bininj teachers and Bininj power and control (both strongly expressed in the data) is to be realised then strategies to achieve this goal must be developed. These should be led by Bininj in collaboration with industry and other providers.

HOW WELL IS THIS BEING ACHIEVED?

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CLOSER COOPERATION BETWEEN WARDDEKEN LAND MANAGEMENT AND NAWARDDEKEN ACADEMY

Despite the historically close connection between Nawarddeken Academy and Warddeken Land Management, there did not seem to be a strong partnership between the two organisations at an operational level. When we spoke with Warddeken workers, they had little understanding about what happened at school and when we spoke with school staff, they too had only a limited understanding of what was happening in the Warddeken workplace. Given the importance of land management and ranger work, we could have expected to see closer cooperation between the school and Warddeken. If the Academy is to establish pathways towards land management jobs or careers, then we could expect to see stronger connections and collaborative working relationships so that the important work of learning on-Country is connected to working on-Country. While we recognise that primary aged children are not ready for work experience, for older children there may be ways that they can be encouraged to do more learning activities with rangers. There is evidence that this is happening to some extent (involving young people in camera trapping work, for example. See Figure 13), but we feel that it could be strengthened, perhaps with a dedicated learning on-Country liaison role working between the Academy and Warddeken Land Management.

HOW WELL IS THIS BEING ACHIEVED?

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CREATING TRAINING PATHWAYS FOR ASSISTANTS AND ASPIRING TEACHERS

Building workforce capacity of Bininj staff follows naturally on from recruitment (as discussed earlier). In other words, once the Academy has an adequate pool of Bininj staff ready to work in the school, there should be clear training options available to them so they can progress to higher paid and more responsible positions within the school environment. The NT Department of Education is taking this approach with the re-establishment of the Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education (RATE) program, tying completion of units to pay scale increments and work roles. As with RATE, a focus on on-Country learning, supported with campus-based workshops, may be worth pursuing. Before advancing this idea, though, it will be important for the Academy to do some strategic thinking and planning about the best ways forward.

The cost of on-Country training is high and this needs to be factored into strategic thinking. Another factor that might be important to address is the adequacy of internet infrastructure, which at present is patchy. Better bandwidth and more reliable connections would facilitate more options in terms of online learning, including access to existing online learning opportunities akin to an adult learning open college, which was suggested by some respondents. Online learning may also be a solution to the problem of disruptions to travel, which have been regular due to covid in the past two years, but which are always a possibility due to weather and funerals.

HOW WELL IS THIS BEING ACHIEVED?

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Figure 13. Students learning about camera trapping

SECONDARY PROGRAMS AND A BUSH UNIVERSITY

While there was little in the interview data to suggest that secondary education was a pressing priority — we specifically asked about this in our second-round interviews — it is inevitable that in time there will be increasing demand for middle years, senior years and vocational learning programs for young people. We are conscious of a level of distrust in the role of boarding schools for young people, and there is some disquiet about community-based secondary education (notably in Gunbalanya, but also Maningrida) and a vision to see aspirations for learning beyond school (e.g. bush university). We think there is scope for the board to consider secondary options in the medium term (say, five years ahead). This may depend on potential student numbers and other factors we are not aware of now, but to maximise the effectiveness of Nawarddeken Academy this should be a consideration. One possibility might be to establish a homeland boarding model at one location (e.g. Manmoyi). This may be an opportunity to attract additional ABSTUDY funds to increase its financial viability.

Beyond secondary programs there is a need for complementary adult learning programs that build foundation (work readiness) skills, literacy and numeracy, and specific workplace skills. Young people who choose to stay on-Country should have the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills that young people in urban areas have, and there should be no reason why opportunity for young adults to learn could not be made available. Having a larger pool of skilled young people will likely support recruitment of Bininj staff for the school. There has long been a vision among some Bininj for a 'bush university' which would support further learning for adults on-Country. However, the structure of this concept is still fairly loosely defined (it is not the same as a university in the bush) and while the intention for Bininj knowledge to be at the centre, the tangible form of such an 'institute' (if that is what it should be called) is unclear. Development of the bush university idea into a formal proposal would be a logical next step. And while this is, for now, out of scope for the Academy, the development of a proposal for this and additional secondary programs may be best placed under the umbrella of the Academy.

Quite a lot of strategic thinking and planning needs to be done to find the best ways forward for secondary education, vocational training opportunities and a bush university to be made accessible for Bininj on homelands.

HOW WELL IS THIS BEING ACHIEVED?

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WITH BALANDA STAFF

The interviews brought out the need to engage parents and homeland centre members in children's education at school. There was less focus on the need for Balanda staff to engage with the community and vice versa. The Balanda non-local staff we talked with were all keen to build strong connections with Bininj families, to take opportunities to learn Kunwinjku and to operate within a culturally responsive paradigm in their pedagogy and in a both-ways approach in their engagement with Bininj. That said, we can reasonably expect Balanda staff turnover to continue to be a feature of schooling in the homelands (as it always has been). Balanda come with their own western biases and positionalities, regardless of their past experience in remote communities. Community members can play an important role in educating Balanda, breaking down pre-conceived ideas, and explaining cultural protocols. Over time, Balanda will respond to their experiences of culture, but given the expected rates of turnover, the process can be speeded up through intentional activities designed to support Balanda learning. It need not be a formal process of training/professional learning, but it does require intentional action from Bininj. How this might occur could be something for the Academy board to consider in conjunction with Bininj Elders.

In our second round of interviews there was an emphasis on male/female teachers, preferably a couple to be engaged. This seemed important to some Bininj, for females to work with female students and males to work with male students. Cultural safety is a consideration here.

HOW WELL IS THIS BEING ACHIEVED?

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PROFESSIONAL, LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL LEARNING FOR BALANDA STAFF

In addition to the need for Balanda engagement with Bininj, there is scope to improve and expand induction professional learning processes. While Kunwinjku can be picked up informally through interactions with community members, Balanda staff might also be encouraged to attend CDU Bininj Kunwok courses, which run from time to time. Other professional learning processes that support greater Balanda reflexivity and cultural self-awareness could also be helpful.

HOW WELL IS THIS BEING ACHIEVED?

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FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE MODELS

To date, Nawarddeken Academy has been well supported by philanthropy through the Karrkad Kanjdji Trust, particularly ahead of registration of the Kabulwarnamyo campus. Support from Warddeken Land Management Limited and, following registration, funding from the Australian Government, and to a small extent the Northern Territory Government, has contributed to the Academy being in a strong financial position. Going forward, with additional students at Manmoyi and Mamadawerre attracting funding from the Australian Government, we could expect to see some economies of scale developing to support the sustainability of the school. However, we note that funding has been raised by some locals and non-locals we talked with as a concern. The diversified approach to attracting support for a range of activities has worked well for the Academy and we would expect this should remain the case, particularly as the Academy potentially seeks to:

- Build Bininj workforce capacity and skills.
- Explore additional opportunities for secondary aged young people.
- Engage students in specialist learning activities.
- Improve IT infrastructure, school buildings/resources and staff accommodation.
- Maintain community research and evaluation capacity.

HOW WELL IS THIS BEING ACHIEVED?

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What kind of outcomes and shared values does the Academy aim to achieve, and how well does it achieve these?

In describing 'outcomes' it is tempting to draw on mainstream metrics of attendance and academic achievement to describe the success of the Academy. We take the view that 'attendance' is not an outcome of schooling — rather it is an indicator of how well engaged students are at school. Based on data from the 2020 annual report (see Figure 14), we see relatively strong attendance rates for children compared with other very remote schools, which averaged 63% in 2019 and 57% in 2021. We are confident that student engagement is relatively strong, noting the disruptions associated with covid-19, lockdowns and the introduction of biosecurity zones during 2020.

Figure 14. Attendance rates 2019 and 2020 (Nawarddeken Academy Limited, 2021, p. 59)

Attendance data				
	2019	2020	2019	2020
	No. of students	No. of students	% Attendance	% Attendance
Term 1	22	18	87%	93%
Term 2	26	12	94%	82%
Term 3	23	35	87%	85%
Term 4	16	17	90%	78%

As stated earlier, the aims of the Academy are articulated in its five objectives:

- Provide the social, cultural, emotional and physical wellbeing of every child
- Preserve Nawarddeken languages and culture through bilingual and bicultural experiential learning
- Empower our young people to be strong and confident in both knowledge systems, and who have the capacity to become ambassadors internationally
- Promote intergenerational education where communities share learning experiences to conserve language and culture
- Develop clear pathways for young Indigenous people on West Arnhem Land that match their aspirations and the aspirations of their families.

Our responses to this evaluation question, therefore, intersect with these objectives.

INSTILLING PRIDE IN CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

Culture and language are foundational for learning at Nawarddeken Academy and intrinsic to the wellbeing of children (Object 1). The strength of this has been noted in aspirational statements about the importance of respecting Elders, the passing on of knowledge, and ensuring Bininj power and control. It is also reflected in the benefits that local and non-local respondents discussed in relation to homeland schooling — the importance of learning on and from Country, drawing on Bininj knowledge and using language (Object 2).

There is no doubt that Bininj are proud of their achievements in establishing the school and this pride is reflected in the teaching and learning that occurs through the school. Respondents also spoke of being proud of the students as a marker of their success. That pride is to a large extent based on the transmission of Bininj knowledge from Elders to young people (Object 4).

We observed a sense of achievement among many respondents at the news of the registration of schools at Manmoyi and Mamadawerre, which reflects a feeling that Bininj have, at least in part, regained control over education in the Warddeken homelands. We recognise that this represents an extraordinary achievement for Bininj.

HOW WELL IS THIS BEING ACHIEVED?

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MAKING VISIBLE A PATHWAY TO WORKING ON-COUNTRY

The visibility of a pathway to working on-Country is to a large extent made clear by parents and family members in the homelands who are working with Warddeken Land Management. To some extent, where on-Country visits and camps intersect with land management/working on-Country activities, the Academy plays a role in connecting learning on-Country to working on-Country (Object 5). There could be a more intentional role played by the Academy to make the pathway more visible. We noted earlier (see page 46) that there could be closer cooperation between the two organisations. There will be more opportunities for intentional connections to working on-Country for older students (for example, with work experience and on-Country training programs), but for those younger children, with some planning it could be quite reasonable to expect that learning units relating to environmental science, history and culture, and integrated literacy and numeracy (and others) could provide a stronger link between what happens in and out of the classroom and what happens in workplaces. This is both-ways teaching and learning in action.

There is considerable scope for the Academy to work on these pathway issues, and not just with respect to land management work. Other on-Country work roles (for example, in teaching, administration and governance, and health) will continue to grow in importance as more people live on-Country.

HOW WELL IS THIS BEING ACHIEVED?

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MODELLING BININJ VALUES

To the extent that Bininj are involved in the Academy, there is some modelling of Bininj values. This is perhaps notable in governance, camps, visits to significant cultural heritage sites, and other art and culture activities where Bininj engage strongly. As more Bininj are employed to work in classrooms we would expect to see a stronger emphasis of modelling values through first language. Balanda teachers are largely unable to do this modelling because they bring with them a different set of values. Nevertheless, the on-Country locus of education means that regardless of what happens in the classroom, students will see Bininj values represented all around them through family, Bininj workers and Elders (Object 4). We see young Bininj responding to learning with confidence and pride (Object 3). One of the keys to building on this outcome is recruitment of more local staff, which we discussed in response to the previous question (see page 45).

HOW WELL IS THIS BEING ACHIEVED?

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FOCUS ON ENGLISH AND KUNWINJKU LITERACY AND NUMERACY

Again, while it might be tempting to draw on mainstream measures of success in terms of testing results, we feel the small numbers involved would not be worth reporting on, and in any case these outcomes would reflect only on English language ability. Therefore, we have not sought testing data for the school.

That said, it is important for teachers to know where children are at in relation to expectations of the curriculum. It is also important, in the context of Kunwinjku as first language, for teachers to know how students are progressing. We are not aware of assessment rubrics for Kunwinjku literacy being employed at Nawarddeken Academy, though we are aware of the development of assessment tools for cultural knowledge. The development of appropriate assessment standards for first language should be a priority for the school in support of a bilingual/both-ways learning experience that many of our respondents were keen to see.

Use of some Kunwinjku resources and Tendril and song-writing workshops conducted during the evaluation period are good examples of home-grown resources that can be built on in the future. The development of the Kunmayali app (see Figure 15) is also evidence of an emerging set of resources that could be useful over time.

Figure 15. Kunmayali app screenshot

We observed and heard of many activities that support both English and Kunwinjku literacy development. Of note is the work done to map local curriculum priorities against Australian Curriculum requirements, and the associated seasonal calendar, discussed earlier, to ensure teaching and learning is embedded in culture (see also Figure 12). The work on the various language and culture projects has been substantial (Object 2), but more can be done to formalise first language and bilingual learning processes with appropriate content, resources and assessments. This maybe in form of intense workshops with Bininj linguists, language workers, Elders, researchers with input from non-Aboriginal linguists, educators and researchers. It may also arise from exchanges with other remote schools who have done good work in this area.

HOW WELL IS THIS BEING ACHIEVED?

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IMPLICATIONS FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING

In this section of the report we outline the key strategic priorities to come out of the evaluation. These are largely the product of a workshop conducted with the Academy in May 2021 with some additions to take account of the new findings. The strategic directions are premised on an assumption that the aspirations expressed by Bininj in the evaluation should become the new reality as shown in Table 3 below.

Figure 16. Strategic planning workshop participants, June 2021

Table 3. Premise for strategic planning directions priorities

Turning hope (aspirations) into reality.	Turning reality into history
Bininj power	Balanda teacher in control
Bininj kunwok	English
Bininj culture	Balanda cultures
Kunmayali	Western thinking
Recognising success	Seeing 'gaps' and children as 'behind'
On-Country work ready	Primary only (up to year 7)

Strategy 1:

FOCUS ON KUNWINJKU LITERACY (READING AND WRITING) AS A PRIORITY, NOT JUST FOR CHILDREN BUT ADULTS AS WELL

We recommend consideration of the following points in support of this work.

a. Compile and develop Kunwinjku literacy resources, electronic and hard copy – many can be included in content for the Kunmayali app.

b. Check and visit CALL collection in BIITE library and Batchelor Press at Batchelor for resources, also check LAAL resources at CDU https://laal.cdu.edu.au/

c. Find out who is available to read and write Kunwinjku as potential teachers and mentors, then use these for professional learning and classroom support.

d. Build Kunwinjku adult literacy expertise among Bininj and Balanda (e.g. CDU course) https://bininj-kunwok.cdu.edu.au/ with support from Bininj Kunwok Regional Language Centre

e. Apply elements of the NT ILC (First Language Bilingual pathway) https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/indigenous-languages-and-cultures

f. Draw on the ACARA Indigenous Language Framework for sequence, pathway and assessment guidelines https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/languages/framework-for-aboriginal-languages-and-torres-strait-islander-languages/

g. Develop a Bininj Kunwok assessment and reporting framework/strategy

h. Include signs at school and in community using Kunwinjku

i. Use and build digital literacies and capacity (devices and infrastructure) where possible

Where resources are not available to explore these points, we suggest there may be scope to develop a philanthropic grant application to support these developmental activities.

We note the progress already made towards some of these suggestions. The work done in developing and populating the Kunmayali app is considerable. And of fundamental importance to curriculum planning is the curriculum mapping exercise and the development of the seasonal calendar as an underpinning curriculum framework for teaching and learning.

Strategy 2:

IDENTIFY AND RECRUIT MORE BININJ ASSISTANT TEACHERS

We recommend consideration of the following points in support of this strategy.

a. Promote options for employment, with remuneration based on qualifications

b. Seek expressions of interest from Bininj in all homelands (who have we got available?)

c. Work with Elders to identify who is coming through Years 11 and 12 who could be supported to train - generating the spark of interest, talking it up, to make a difference in the community and their school

d. Invite CDU and BIITE VET lecturers to meet potential students on-Country to explain courses and processes so that courses can be properly contextualised

e. Review remuneration scales and benefits for Bininj staff to position school roles more attractively, compared with other work options

We recognise the challenges associated with the recruitment of Bininj for school roles. We know that many people who would otherwise be suited for roles at Nawarddeken Academy are already employed in other roles on the homelands or have other priorities.

Strategy 3:

CREATE TRAINING PATHWAYS FOR EXISTING BININJ STAFF BASED ON AN ASSESSMENT OF SKILLS

It is quite likely that there is some uncertainty about what is required to become a trained (Cert IV) assistant teacher and even more uncertainty about what is required to become a university qualified teacher. We recommend the following activities to support this strategy:

a. Consider VET course options at BIITE https://www.batchelor.edu.au/students/courses/vet-courses/ and CDU https://www.cdu.edu.au/study/education#!tab-4

b. Conduct a skills audit to determine skill levels and requirements

c. Explore potential of RATE (in a trial phase for selected government schools)

d. Professional learning days/programs for Bininj staff

e. Visits/exchanges to other remote schools, such as Tiwi College, Dhupuma or Marpuru — spaces to share ideas/learn from each other

f. Participation at AISNT school conferences/meetings, Barunga, Garma, again as networking opportunities

g. Consider employing/contracting a trainer/assessor to work on-Country with Bininj, being mindful of cost implications

Strategy 4:

SUPPORT BALANDA TEACHERS LEARNING OF BININJ CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

New Balanda teachers may default to a deficit position without realising it. We would expect biases and misunderstandings of culture to reduce over time and reflexivity to increase. But given predictably high turnover, Balanda teachers can be supported to speed up their cultural awareness and responsiveness. We recommend the following activities to support this strategy:

a. Provide professional learning opportunities, including formal Bininj Kunwok language course through CDU + TESOL

b. Induction processes to be developed, including unpacking local histories, places and colonisation, delivered by local people and experienced Balanda - in a culturally safe way for Bininj and Balanda

c. Seek opportunities for non-formal/informal learning on-Country (out of school hours) and reflexive awareness development and to build relationships

d. Offer research readings that may be relevant for remote and homeland learning

Figure 16. Strategic planning workshop participants, June 2021

Strategy 5:

ENSURE BININJ HISTORIES AND STORIES ARE REFLECTED IN DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACADEMY

We recommend the following activities to support this strategy:

a. Build a stronger arts/STEAM (science technology engineering, arts and mathematics) /music learning framework and program that connects to Bininj stories and histories, and integrates with Kunwinjku literacy (incorporates Tendril and Kunmayali app)

b. Network with organisations that could support this. Find out who would like to collaborate. e.g. Indigenous Volunteers, inDigiMOB, STARS, Clontarf, Girls Academy, AFL, hip hop programs, etc. Finding new ways of sharing knowledge and strengthen Bininj using innovative media recording and performing on-Country learning

c. Establish an Elder/artist-in-residence program

d. Use exchange visits with other remote schools to gather ideas and explore possibilities

There is probably scope with this strategy to design a special project with external expertise in conjunction with local Bininj that does the work to set up the framework, program and resources required to make this work.

Strategy 6:

MAKE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN WHAT HAPPENS AT SCHOOL AND WORK ON-COUNTRY CLEARER

As it is, WLML workers know little about what happens at schools and school staff know little about what happens at WLML. We recommend the following activities to support this strategy:

a. Develop intentional age-appropriate 'learning on-Country with ranger' programs as part of integrated learning activities for students

b. Invite more rangers and other WLML workers to school to talk about and show what they do on-Country

c. Offer VET in schools/work experience programs for secondary-aged students who are at Gunbalanya (or elsewhere) to engage with WLML workers

d. Ensure induction processes for Balanda teachers include time on-Country with rangers

Evaluation and research

The responses to our evaluation questions and the strategic planning implications discussed above provide a foundation for continuing evaluation and new research. Evaluation conducted with Nawarddeken Academy over the past three years has been a comprehensive process of community engagement, deep reflection, thinking and learning, critical assessment, feedback and, importantly, of capacity building for the whole research team.

The evaluation provides a baseline for future reference. This can – arguably should – be used for future, regular (perhaps annual) evaluative processes, and potentially educational research projects, which will benefit the school and the homelands. Coupled with strategic planning processes, evaluation will contribute to future developments, improvements and thoughtful consideration of what is important for young Bininj as they learn and become the future for their Country.

EVALUATION FINDINGS DISSEMINATION PLAN

Following Batchelor Institute's evaluation of Nawarddeken Academy (2019-2021), we propose a series of papers and presentations to highlight issues the research has uncovered.

The plan is to submit to several different journals/conferences 1) to maximise audience reach; 2) to create an extended series of citable papers; 3) to challenge thinking and disrupt/generate policy discussions; 4) to create a space for voices of homeland community researchers; and 5) build the research evidence base to highlight the work of Nawarddeken Academy. By coupling the papers to seminars and conference presentations we will draw in a wider range of authors beyond the research team. This would include present and past practitioners, historians, linguists and others from related areas of interest, potentially from interstate and overseas. The potential impact of this kind of collaborative writing could be quite powerful, just as the Red Dirt Thinking and Aboriginal Voices projects have shown; there is opportunity to change discourse, influence policy and certainly bring visibility to an otherwise largely hidden issue.

Why is this important?

Homeland education in the Northern Territory has received grudging attention from the Department of Education. The sector is grossly under-resourced, and in an era when 'every day counts' mantras of attendance are hard to avoid, many homeland schools are being offered one or two days per week despite the presence of at least 17 DoE schools in the Northern Territory with fewer than 20 children enrolled (identified in ACARA, 2022). The Department's 'excuse' is that the numbers attending do not justify a full-time teaching presence. This is in part an issue of human and Indigenous educational rights, and in part an issue of policy abrogation. While people in homelands are calling for education on-Country, governments have responded with massive financial incentives for scholarship and boarding providers to take young people off Country, often with devastating consequences for the young people. The Nawarddeken Academy evaluation offers a source of evidence based on interviews with 65 (mostly Bininj) people conducted within the Warddeken IPA.

To kickstart this initiative we plan to set up an on-Country writing workshop in the first half of 2022 (April), before the fire season.

Figure 17. Evaluation team at Kabulwarnamyo

Key topics to be addressed

Table 4 summarises topics and potential target destinations for published articles.

Table 4. Nawarddeken Academy Dissemination plan

Working title	Possible target journal	Possible lead	Indicative date
A Homeland Education Journey	Australian and International Journal of Rural Education	Bangarr	March 2022 (published)
Homeland education history across Australia: responding to self-determination	History of Education Review	Guenther/Van Gelderen	May 2023
Nawarddeken Academy history: from working on-Country to learning on-Country	Australian and International Journal of Rural Education	Yibarbuk?	June 2023
Homeland community research methodologies	Alternative	Ober	July 2023
Homeland education: impact and contradictions of contemporary policy-making	Australian Educational Researcher	Guenther	August 2023
Nawarddeken Academy evaluation findings	WIPCE Conference	Yibarbuk	September 2022
Balanda/practitioner perspectives	Australian and International Journal of Rural Education	Scholes?	November 2022
Homeland education	EASA Conference, Cape Town South Africa	Yibarbuk, Maralngurra	January 2023
Red dirt aspirations and success: a view from the Warddeken homelands	Critical Studies in Education	Osborne?	March 2023
Community researcher perspectives (as interviewed in 2021)	Evaluation Journal of Australasia	Yibarbuk, Guymala, Maralngurra, Nabulwad	March 2023
Red dirt power and pedagogy: Bininj perspectives	Australian Journal of Indigenous Education	Osborne?	April 2023
Red dirt advantage in the Warddeken homelands: countering narratives of remote educational deficit	Australian Journal of Indigenous Education	Guenther	May 2023
Country as classroom: Bininj kunmayali at the interface of western educational systems	Journal of Intercultural Studies	Fogarty?	June 2023
The challenges and opportunities of mobility for remote Aboriginal schooling	Journal of Australian Education	Guenther	July 2023
The philosophy of homeland schooling: why learning on-Country?	Australian Journal of Indigenous Education	Ober?	August 2023
Bush university and adult learning	Australian and International Journal of Rural Education	Yibarbuk?	September 2023

CONCLUSIONS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This evaluation report represents the culmination of three years' work with Nawarddeken Academy and the homelands of Kabulwarnamyo, Mamadawerre and Manmoyi. During the evaluation period, the Academy gained registration as an independent school in each of these sites.

The evaluation sought to assist the Academy to 1) learn from and develop its governance, academic, and community engagement processes; and 2) to determine what the outcomes and values of its work are. It has done so through a robust methodology, which engaged a team of community-based researchers, to gain a sense of what the school's stakeholders think. The evaluation team engaged people in important discussions about the purpose of school, the way young people should be taught, what they should be taught, and about the strengths, successes and challenges associated with learning in the Warddeken homelands.

The evaluation has found strong aspirations for education in the Warddeken homelands, with expectations that young people will benefit from local knowledge (kunmayali), learning with Kunwinjku language (kunwok), with strong support for cultural values derived from learning on-Country. People expect to see Bininj in control and they want to see pathways for young people to engage in work on-Country and at school.

Findings point to both strengths and opportunities for education in the Warddeken homelands. The Academy's strategic planning processes have drawn on the findings and their implications to map a path to the future.

The Batchelor research team acknowledge that without the strong support of the local Bininj community-based researchers, the depth of information gained from interviews conducted in language would not have been possible. Bininj researchers also contributed strongly to the design of interview instruments and to the thinking that emerged for the Academy's strategic planning.

The team also acknowledges the support from executive officer Olga Scholes who, despite disruptions from covid, refused to give up and managed to bring the team together under sometimes difficult circumstances.

Finally, the team acknowledges the support of Karrkad-Kanjdji Trust (KKT), whose financial support for the evaluation made the work possible. KKT's support has not only supported the evaluation, but enabled and facilitated the development of a team of researchers, who are now strongly positioned to engage in future research and evaluation work.

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APPENDIX 1.
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Round 1 interview questions

1 Baleh ngudda yidjare yinan bu yerrika kunmayali kore namudke. njale ngudda yidjare? Njale yibengkan bu yerrika kakarremarnbuyindan kore bedberre wurdurd bu kabirriyidabbolkmen.

2 Njale ngudda yibengkan wurdurd kabirribolbme baleh mahni kakarreyime bu kabirribolbme. njale ngudda yibengkan kunmayali boken kabirribolbme. kaluk njaleken baleh mahni yinan kakukyime?

3 Yiddok ngad karribidyikarrmerren bu kulhkenh kadberre wurdurdken? Yiddok makka mankarrewoyhbuk?

4 Njaleken ngad karridjare kulhkenh?

5 Baleh ngarrbenyimowon nawu wurdurdken kabirriwohrewohre?

6 Baleh bu ngad ngarrbenbidyikarrme wurdurd ngarrku bu mahni mankarre kakarreborlehborledme?

1. How do you see the future for education in your community? What do you want? What is your vision into the future?

2. What do you think children should be learning about and how should they learn? What do you think about two-way learning? What is it and what does it look like?

3·. Do you support homeland schooling? Why is it important?

4. What is the purpose of school?

5. How do we work with students that ·are moving around?

6. How do we support children in a changing world?

Round 2 interview questions

NAWARDDEKEN ACADEMY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR 2021

(1) Ngalbadjan Dja Kornkumo

Njale wurdurd kabolhme kore kawore?

Baleh kakarremarnbuyingdan bu ngudda kunred yini kamak?

FOR PARENTS

How do children learn when you move around? What would make it easier for you to stay in the homelands?

(2) Njale yawurrinj dja yawkyawk kunmayali kamakmen kamurrngrayekwon kanmarnemulewan bu kakarrerayek

Yiyimen njale yibekan bu ngunmurrngrayekwon kore kunmayali?

Njale kunmayali ngunmurrngrayekwon?

Njale ngunmarnbun yimayaliburlumerren?

Njale kamarnbun kamurrngrayekwon manbu kurlken kore yawurrinj yawkyawk?

Njale yidjare yinan kore kurlken Nawadekken kunred? Yawurrinj yawkyawk nawa birribalyawkimuk kabolkyimerren?

Njale kab yibenbidyikarrme nawa yawurrinj yawkyawk birribalyawkimuk kabirridjalni bu kabirribolme?

FOR YOUNGER PEOPLE: STORIES OF SUCCESS

Tell us what it means to be strong or successful? What makes you proud? How does school make young people strong?

What would you like to see for middle or secondary school at Nawarddeken?

What would help young Bininj to stay on-Country and keep learning?

(3) Karrimornamerren kudjalkudji

Njale bu yibekan bolkkime mankarre kurlken kore warddeken kunerd? (kamak dja kawarre)

Baleh karrikuduyime bu ngarrbenkimang kornkumo dja ngalbadjan dja dabborrabolk

Nawa bininj dja daluk dirddja?

FOR EVERYONE TOGETHER

What do you think are the main issues for schooling in the Warddeken homelands?

How can we bring more parents, elders and Bininj teachers into school?

(4) Bu bininj dja daluk kabeneyimeren duninjh

Baleh bu yibidyikarrme nawa kayimerran dirddja duninjh?

FOR POTENTIAL BININJ TEACHERS

What would you need to help you become a teacher?

(5) Kadedjdjingmang bu kabolmeken

Baleh bu ngarrbenyikarrme ngalbabadjan dja wurdwurd nawa birriyahwurd bu kabirrimdjarrkre.

EARLY LEARNING

How can we bring young mums together?

APPENDIX 2. TABULATED RESULTS

Note that in the tables below, 'references' refer to coded text. In some cases one piece of coded text is coded to several different items. Within group differences for locals and non-locals are determined through a chi-square test and are indicated with a probability value (either <.05 or <0.1). Items not indicated do not show a statistically significant difference.

Future vision

Table 5 summarises responses related to future vision. We have grouped the themes under several clusters: Between two worlds, Beyond the community, Bininj first, Engagement and participation, Funding and support, and Workforce issues. Non-locals were more likely to talk about 'walking in two worlds, Bininj curriculum, student engagement and capacity issues than locals. Locals were more likely to discuss vision in relation to respect for elders and intergenerational learning and full-time education, than non-locals.

Table 5. Summary of responses related to future vision

	References: Local (n=154)	References: Nonlocal (n=173)	Within-group differences
Between two worlds	33	42	
Balanda and Bininj working together	18	17	
Beyond the community	13	17	
Bilingual learning	9	4	
Higher aspirations	6	5	
Walking in two worlds	4	12	p<.05
Balanda learning Kunwinjku language and culture	3	2	
Bush university	3	1	
Recognise the intercultural challenge	2	6	
Better English	2	3	
University	2	4	
Reflexivity	0	1	
Working through discomfort	0	2	
Languages other than English	0	2	
Life skills	0	3	
Bininj first	42	42	
Respect for Elders and intergenerational learning	18	4	p<.05
Bininj power and control	16	17	
Relationship to country and people	5	3	
Bininj Curriculum	3	17	p<.05
Strong community	2	0	

	References: Local (n=154)	References: Nonlocal (n=173)	Within-group differences
Working from strengths	1	4	
ILC Curriculum	0	1	
Engagement and participation	46	53	
Parents engaged in education	18	25	
Full time education (5 days/week)	15	4	p<.05
Attendance	9	15	
Too much mobility	5	1	
FAFT program	4	0	
Pedagogy	0	3	
Poverty	0	2	
Student engagement	0	6	p<.05
Funding and support	10	12	
Workforce issues	43	52	
Employment, jobs and career	15	20	
Bininj teachers	11	12	
Training, assistant teachers on-Country	11	14	
Pathways	5	9	
Balanda teachers	3	6	
Couple working together	3	0	
Kunwinjku literacy	1	2	
Capacity issues	0	5	p<.05
Total	194	232	

Homeland schooling

Table 6. Summarises responses related to homeland schooling. We have grouped the findings under headings of benefits and challenges. Locals were more likely to discuss the benefit of Bininj knowledge in the homeland learning context, and they were more likely to suggest that boarding is not a solution to the challenges of homeland education.

Table 6. Summary of responses related to homeland schooling

	References: Local (n=142)	References: Nonlocal (n=148)	Within-group differences
Benefits	108	84	
Learning both ways	35	26	
Learning on from country	26	29	
Bininj knowledge Kunmayali	24	7	P<0.05
Language Kunwok	24	19	
Respect for culture	17	26	
Less fighting, problems	6	0	
Better future Yerrikah	4	0	
Kids growing up on-Country	2	0	
Freedom	1	3	
Challenges	41	74	
Working together and partnerships	13	11	
Role of government	12	26	
More secondary activities for young people	7	4	
Boarding doesn't work	5	0	P<.05
Health and wellbeing issues	4	3	
Expanded to other communities	2	2	
Internet and technology	2	10	
Work experience and training	1	13	
Competing priorities	0	4	
Limited access to services	0	2	
Resources and infrastructure	0	3	
Total	185	188	

Supporting young Bininj in a changing world

Table 7 summarises responses in relation to support for young Bininj in a changing world. Locals were more likely than locals to discuss the need to support young people with Bininj values, knowing right from wrong. Non-locals were more concerned about adult learning and opportunities for learning and working on-Country than locals.

Table 7. Summary of responses related to supporting young Bininj in a changing world

	References: Local (n=60)	References: Nonlocal (n=53)	Within-group differences
Bininj values: right and wrong	23	7	p<.05
Support wurrurd	13	5	P<.1
Bininj making strong choices	10	4	
Opportunity to learn and work on-Country	9	22	p<.05
Supporting rights	6	2	
Adult role models	5	4	
Tools and knowledge to adapt	2	5	
Adult learning	0	7	p<.05
Problem solving skills	0	4	
Slow down and adapt to climate change	0	4	
Technology	0	2	
Total	68	66	

Purpose of school

Table 8 summarises responses related to the purpose of schooling. Locals were more likely than non-locals to suggest the purpose of school was about creating strong, confident wurrurd, while non-locals were more likely than locals to suggest that it was about success.

Table 8. Summary of responses related to the purpose of school

	References: local (n=43)	References: Nonlocal (n=59)	Within-group differences
Strong confident wurrurd	16	5	p<.05
Literacy and numeracy skills	8	14	
Reinforcing Bininj ontology and cosmology	7	17	
Learning	5	8	
Become strong parents	3	0	
Citizenship	3	1	
Leadership	3	2	
Jobs, career future	2	4	
Knowing rules	2	0	
Social relationships	1	2	
Choices	0	2	
Creating thinkers	0	2	
Equity	0	1	
Health and wellbeing	0	1	
Productive life	0	3	
Successful	0	11	p<.05
Surviving	0	1	
Total	50	74	

Supporting mobility

Table 9 summarises responses to questions about support for student and family mobility. Locals were more likely than non-locals to suggest that mobility created a space to build cultural knowledge. They were more likely to talk about the need for an open college option for students who miss out because of mobility. Non-locals were more concerned about building a workable relationship with Gunbalanya school as a solution to mobility, than locals.

Table 9. Summary of responses related to supporting mobility

	References: local (n=33)	References: non-local (n=31)	Within-group differences
Build cultural knowledge	9	3	p<.1
Mobile school or multi-site school	7	4	
Open College	4	0	p<.05
Teachers go with students to funerals	4	3	
Better communication across sites	2	2	
Integrate learning from ceremony and cultural events at school	2	3	
Use Saturdays and Sundays	2	0	
Learning from different Country	1	0	
Online learning	1	4	
Resources to help parents get back to homelands	1	0	
Take it as a given	1	0	
Transport	1	0	
Build more routine	0	1	
Draw on children's' creativity	0	2	
Engaging learning	0	1	
Home school	0	1	
Homework	0	2	
Mobility becomes an opportunity	0	3	
Improved relationship with Gunbalanya	0	5	p<.05
Talk to parents	0	1	
Total	35	35	

Success stories

Table 10 summarises responses to a question about how people see successful young people. This was a question which we focused on in round 2 interviews, which were mostly with Bininj community members. Responses from non-locals are, therefore, less than for locals.

Table 10. Summary of responses related to stories of success

	References: local (n=28)	References: non-local (n=11)	Within-group differences
Proud of the young person	10	7	
Learn to become teacher	5	1	
Work	5	3	
Graduation	4	0	
Strong Bininj knowledge	3	0	
Both ways knowledge	2	0	
Kids learn hard things	2	0	
Cultural knowledge	1	0	
Happy wurrurd	1	0	
Keeping on a straight path	1	0	
Knowledge	1	0	
Learning stories	1	0	
Learning to be strong	1	0	
More kids in school	1	0	
Young people take responsibility	1	1	
Feeling rewarded satisfied	0	1	
Good parents	0	1	
Skills	0	2	
Total	39	16	

APPENDIX 3.
EVALUATION QUESTION RESPONSES PRIORITISED

CONSIDERABLY MORE WORK NEEDS TO BE DONE

★

Recruitment of Bininj staff

Creating training pathways for assistants and aspiring teachers

SEVERAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT (CONSIDERABLE WORK TO BE DONE)

★★

Closer cooperation between Warddeken Land Management and Nawarddeken Academy

Secondary programs and a bush university

Making visible a pathway to working on-Country

GOOD PROGRESS TOWARDS STRONGER OUTCOMES IS EVIDENT (ACTION REQUIRED SOON)

★★★

Language (kunwok)

Professional, language and cultural learning for Balanda staff

Modelling Bininj values

Focus on English and Kunwinjku literacy and numeracy

STRONG RESULTS BUT WITH SOME ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT (MINIMAL ACTION REQUIRED NOW)

★★★★

Incorporation of local curriculum priorities (e.g. seasonal calendar)

Strong governance and local leadership

Connecting to Country and ancestors (cosmologies)

Community engagement with Balanda staff

Financially sustainable models

VERY STRONG RESULTS (NO FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED NOW)

★★★★★

On-Country learning experiences: Country as classroom. Country as teacher.

Community involvement

Learning 'both-ways' (Balanda and Bininj)

Bininj kunmayali (epistemologies) knowledge

Elder involvement and intergenerational knowledge transmission

Respecting culture

Affirming Bininj identities and building confidence (ontologies)

Supporting Bininj values (axiologies)

Instilling pride in culture and language

NAWARDDEKEN ACADEMY

Karrkad Kanjdji Trust

Supporting country, culture and community

Batchelor Institute