**AEO 2023 Recap**

This year, MPS has accomplished a lot in relation to Aboriginal education.

One of our biggest events this year (and every year) is NAIDOC Week. This year’s theme was ‘For Our Elders’. As with every year, our NAIDOC Week was action packed with many activities. These included: an assembly, flag raising, and Elders’ Morning Tea run by our Aboriginal Student Voice, chalk art at Riverside Park, johnny cake making (assisted by our Aboriginal Student Voice) and ending the week with a mufti day and farewell to our beloved Uncle Darryl who retired (sad for us but great for him) this year. One of the highlights of the week was our amazing time at Bingie Point where students, and parents participated in several cultural programs facilitated by Aunty Trish Ellis, Mrs Boyenga, Vikki Parsley, and Moruya High School’s students, Clontarf students, and staff.

The Aboriginal Student Voice are into their second year and continued to inspire, advise, and evolve personally as leaders and role models. One of their highlight’s this year was they established a bush tucker garden (warragal greens and pig face) to be utilised in the Kitchen Garden program in 2024.

This year, our school was invited to apply to participate in the Indigenous Reading Project. Only 120 Aboriginal students were to be chosen nationally to participate in the program. We were hoping that at least 1 or 2 of our students would be successful. In the end, 7 of our students were chosen to participate which was great achievement for our student (and our school). Students were provided with a tablet and had access to an extensive online library. The program was based on good attendance and aimed to encourage and improving reading. At the end of the program, students who increased their reading, were able to keep the tablet and have ongoing access to the online library.

The Yiridbu Minga ‘Connecting to Country’ Program facilitated by Muladha Gamara, was a 7-week program involving at school and ‘On Country’ cultural experiences. 15 Aboriginal students from Years 4 to 6 were chosen to participate and were allowed to invite a friend to also participate. A total of 25 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students participated in the program. Activities included: smoking ceremony, traditional dance and stories, dhugan (shelter) and clap stick making; bush food and medicine knowledge; On Country experiences to Grandfather’s Gully and Shelleys Beach; and ended with a day with other participating school such as MHS, Batemans Bay primary and high schools at Mogo.

This year’s end of year Presentation, saw 15 of our Aboriginal students receiving a total of 17 awards! Congratulations to our Aboriginal students for their achievement and who continue to strive, achieve, and inspire.

Other highlights for 2023 included: Yarn-Up Afternoon Tea with our parents; continued running of our weekly dhurga language program for our Year 3 to Year 6 classes by the amazing Mrs Boyenga; continue to build connection and relationship with Aunty Lisa (AEO), DK (Clontarf) and students from MHS; Year 6 Aboriginal students participation in an AECG NSW’s Online Lifestyle program and Gadhungal Marring Cultural Day; Stage 2 Aboriginal Boy’s Mentoring Program with MHS Clontarf; 45 students (Aboriginal & non-Aboriginal) and 5 staff attended the Sorry Bridge Walk at Batemans Bay, to reflect and pay our respects to the members of the Stolen Generations; Reconciliation Week assembly run by our Aboriginal Student Voice; MPS students performed an Acknowledgement of Country in the dhurga language at the Eurobodalla Shire Council’s NAIDOC Week Flag Raising ceremony; Aboriginal focused Staff Development Day involving an On Country experience for staff to Bingie Dreaming Track for a cultural walk with Aunty Trish Ellis and dhurga language with Mrs Boyenga; hearing tests by Katungul Aboriginal Medical Service; and 10 of our students (5 Aboriginal students who invited a friend) participated in planting at the Moruya Micro-Forest located at the front of St John’s Parish.

A big thank you to our students, staff, families, community members, services and programs who have contributed to making this year a success!!!

walawaani njindiwan (Safe journey everyone)

Kylie