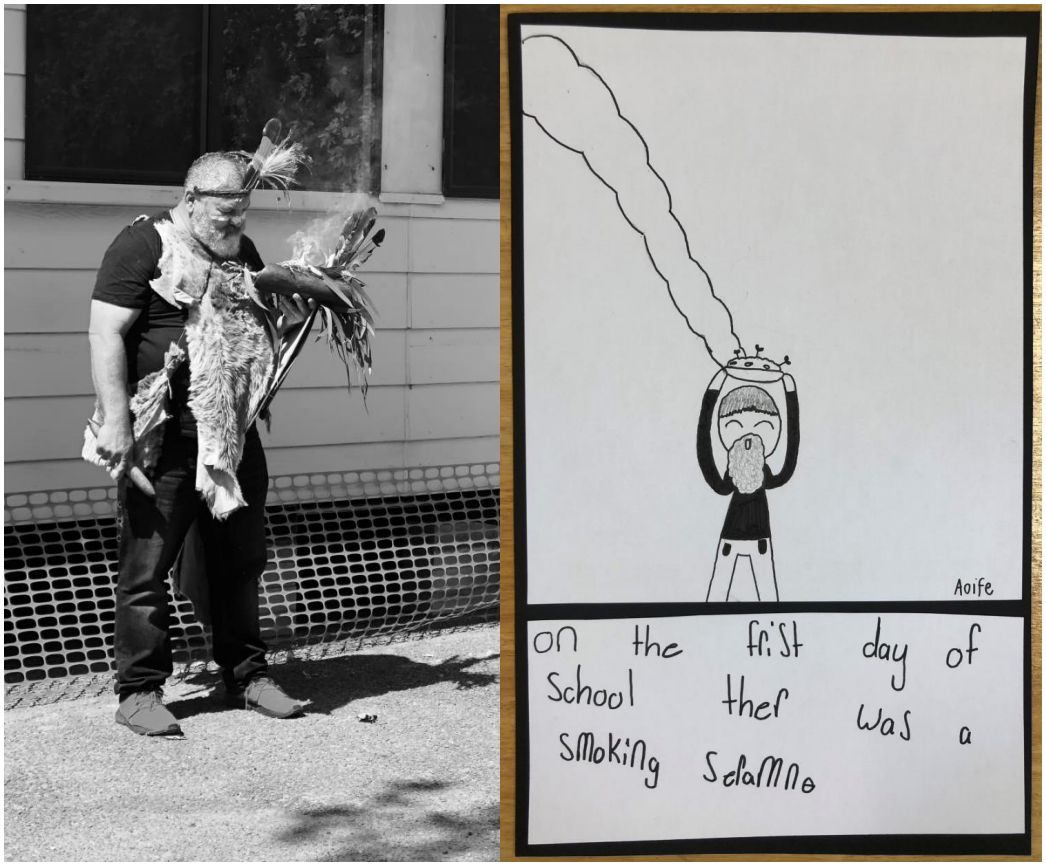
Ngutu College – The Beginning

Ngutu College opened on 1st February 2021. The morning began with a community gathering. At 11 a.m. Michael Kumatpi O'Brien welcomed our community to Kaurna Country through Welcome and Smoking Ceremony. "Look in your heart to find knowledge and wisdom".

All of our children were asked about their hopes and dreams for the college and for their time in the college. The following is a page out of the documentation produced, discussing children's favourite things about the college on day 1. Sone of the stories in this update have been shared on SeeSaw, the app we use to communicate with families.



Uncle Michael Kumatpi O'Brien performed a Smoking Ceremony to welcome us to Kaurna Country on our first day at Ngutu College.

Enrolments

We began the year with 90 children. In the first week, there were a few comings and goings with enrolments but by the end of the second week our numbers settled with 98 children enrolled, 27 of them Aboriginal. In addition, with the announcement of a mid-year intake into Foundation (Reception), we had a further 9 enrolled with 4 of these being Aboriginal. Four weeks in we have a further 7 children who will start in Term 2, 6 of these are Aboriginal. In addition to Aboriginal children from the local area, we have 3 Aboriginal families coming from the northern suburbs and 5 of our Aboriginal enrolments have come through Aboriginal organisations recommending us and supporting the families to enrol.

Kinship

This picture depicts one of our Aboriginal Year 6 children reading with one of our Neuro-diverse children in Foundation (Reception). This shared reading is a weekly event to encourage the concept of kinship, inclusive of all children.

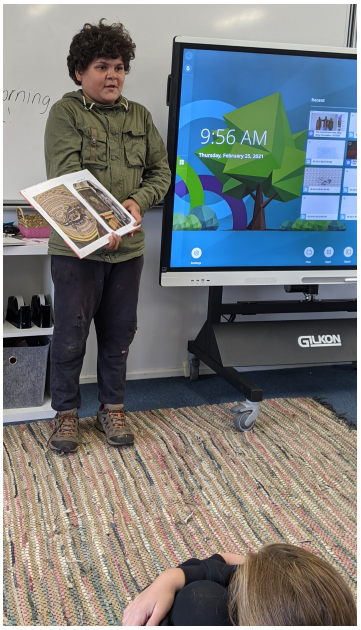
We had our first buddy reading session on Friday morning last week and it was fantastic to see our older Ngutu children engaging so successfully with our younger children. They took their role seriously and I think you can tell by the expressions on the younger children's faces how much they loved it!

Leadership Opportunities

'T' is a Year 7 Aboriginal child. We have known him since he was in Kindy, when he was non-verbal. Over time, this developed such that children understood him and translated for staff, then we would be able to pick up enough to understand his messages. His language has always been a major barrier for him, such that he has had stronger relationships with the APS chickens than humans. At Ngutu, he has continued to be nurtured but he has also been given space to be. Some of this space has been spending time creating 'guns'. There was no judgement of this, it was allowing him to do what he was comfortable with during break times. Then Cassia posted this on our staff Messenger group:

"I'm not sure if I shared with everyone...this moment this afternoon where 'T' made a game for the whole class...he used the guns he has been making for the last 4 weeks, called the game Infection and stood at the front of the class (after calculating how many guns were needed) to explain the rules. Then took the game outside to teach to the class and lead the game! It was a beautiful moment! When the game was over, he asked the class 'who loved the game?' The kids all shot their hands up! I felt so proud I know that he has never had a moment like this before. To lead something, to create something, the confidence and excitement he showed was amazing! This is what it's all about guys!!!!"

After the incredible feedback from his peers (another celebration within this story), he asked to present to class again in the morning and share some of his Dad's artworks. His Dad is a fantastic Artist in Ceduna. The following photo shows 'T' giving his presentation.



Literacy

Bookmaking is a strategy used for developing the image of a child as an Author and Illustrator. Children at Ngutu were not only seeing themselves as authors but also philanthropists, providing their literary works for anyone to take for free. They recorded their message on the pavers leading into the front office for all to see.

Young authors publishing copies of their books and giving them away 'free for anyone' during their break time today. What a wonderful act of kindness 'S' and 'E'. 💕

Emotional Regulation

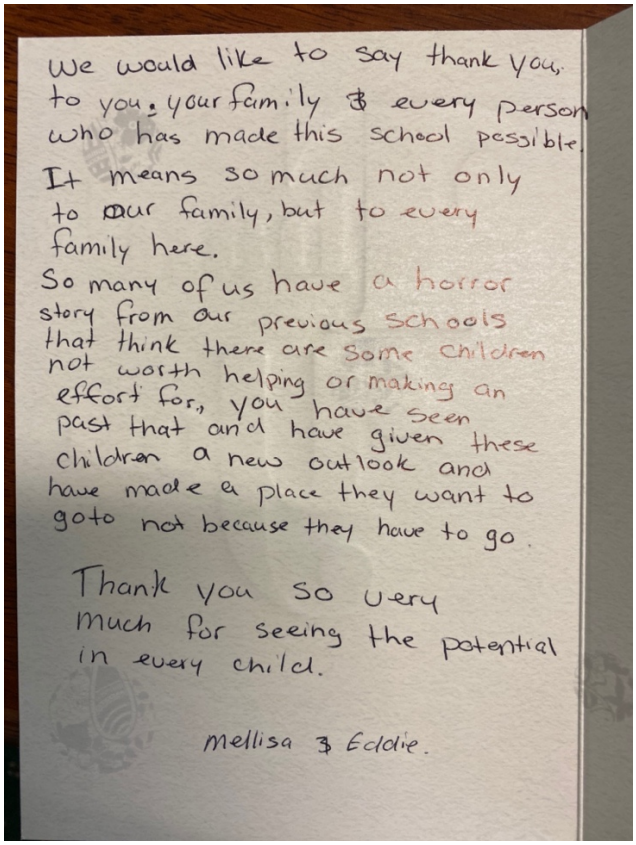
Volunteers have come in many forms as a community wants to be part of creating something important. There is 'J', one of our fathers who has Social Anxiety and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, a highly skilled individual who has not been able to work for many years. He and our Groundsperson have teamed up to become the dynamic duo. He has volunteered every day for 3 weeks. His wife has not seen him so joyous for years. The list of volunteers is significant – cutting fruit, supporting with IT infrastructure, irrigation, working bees, first aid supplies, cleaning, library sorting, providing mud play, providing furniture, sewing… and providing their training therapy dog to become the college's therapy dog, 'Willow'. Even Willow needs her down time though and children understand the concept of giving back. The photo below shows Willow having her break and being read to.

Inclusivity

In our third week we had Amanda Bartram, an inclusivity consultant, spend two days observing staff practices, interactions and individual children with the view to providing critically constructive feedback for ongoing improvement. Amanda will be back on the 11th March to share with us more broadly. She shared a key piece of feedback as she was leaving though. She could feel that Ngutu College was a place of healing – for children, parents and staff.

Parent Feedback

Below, is a photo of a thank you card that is addressed to those involved in getting Ngutu College started. With the card came a present. This family had already spent every day here working in the lead up to us opening, had a friend (with my permission) take drone footage of the site in the 'beginning' to later take comparison shots. Even though they do not have the money to be doing this, the family got one of the still shots printed into a posted and framed for our foyer.



We would like to say thank you, to you, your family & every person who has made this school possible. It means so much not only to our family, but to every family here.
So many of us have a horror story from our previous schools that think there are some children not worth helping or making an effort for, you have seen past that and have given these children a new outlook and have made a place they want to go to not because they have to go.

Thank you so very much for seeing the potential in every child.

Mellisa & Eddie.

We look forward to sharing some more stories of social impact with you at our next reporting date. We will no doubt have so many to share that we will again only be able to share a few.

Andrew Plastow
Head of College
27th February 2021