



Gumnut Gazette

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Learning with Animals in the *Gootha Room*

Over the past two months our little learners have had a lot of different experiences. In particular, our little friends displayed great interest in animals and insects, showing their eagerness to explore this amazing world. For example, we have hung a display made of paper balloons to symbolise the hungry caterpillar in our classroom.

Jack P was fascinated and pointed to the display saying “look! It’s a caterpillar” whilst Olive squealed with excitement when we showed her the display up close.

We set up another animal experience in our classroom that our little learners loved. It is very important to provide these kinds of experiences because our friends not only love to emulate the animal noises, but it also encourages them to keep socialising and building their strong friendships.

Another lovely animal experience we did was reading the story “where is the green sheep?” The Goothas are very fond of this story and have lots of questions about the whereabouts of the green sheep. We expanded this interest by creating our very own green sheep! After we listened to the story we hid the green sheep and asked everyone to find it. Jack P was successful and found it under a book. One by one all the children took turns holding the sheep and giving it nice gentle pats.

“Rumble in the jungle” was another experience that we provided for our children in order to extend their interest in animals. This book is about various animals you will find in the jungle and what they like to do. The book has bright colourful illustrations which caught the eye of our little learners.

We have started a small project called “take a walk into the jungle.” We have created a feature wall with pictures of jungle animals so the children familiarise themselves as well as creating experiences based on these specific animals.

Another lovely experience that we loved doing with our little friends was to create a sea world. In this way we jumped from jungle to sea! In order to do that we set up a craft experience using cardboard cut-outs of sea creatures and offered our little friends the choice of which one they would like to decorate with paint. Throughout this experience our little learners were able to use their social and emotional skills.

In addition to all of this we placed importance on music. Santo brought in his guitar for a music and movement experience during group time. All the children participated in the experience together and had a lovely time singing nursery rhymes and learning the actions to accompany the song.

Another important aspect of our children's learning journey was to enjoy what we call our "third teacher", the environment. Our little learners had lots of opportunities to head outside to the bottom playground to explore the sandpit and physical play equipment. The acrobatic hoops motivated our little friends to use their physical developmental skills.

Finally, in order to encourage our little friends to be responsible for the environment, we ran an activity which gave our children the opportunity to find out why recycling is so important for the planet and how we can bring "waste" products back to life by painting them and setting them for a new purpose. They also had a chance to develop their fine motor skills by learning how to hold and use a paintbrush. The group work taught them how to collaborate with each other to achieve a common goal, how to share and how everyone's small contribution helps to positively impact our environment.

With love,

Santo, Brittany and Annie xx



An Earthly Journey with the *Boori Room*

“We supported a rich, strong and complex idea of children’s thinking, which is far removed from the usual static, reductive and one-dimensional images that continue to be presented in much of publishing.

It is urgent to underline that children’s intelligence asks adult intelligence to be on the same high level as children’s expectations and potential.”

Loris Malaguzzi

As Malaguzzi suggested, it is essential to remember the image of the child we have and that we want to support them during their learning journey in order to develop their maximum potential.

Children are complex human beings, rich in curiosity. What is curiosity? It is the ability to be open to new perspectives; it is the ability to “generate new ideas, pose unfamiliar questions, conjure up fresh ways of thinking and arrive at unexpected answers” as Howard Gardner affirms in his new book, “5 Minds for the Future”.

It is a process of constant transformation and where teachers and children are active and unique protagonists of this learning process.

What is pivotal for us is to support and expand their sense of curiosity and creativity. In fact, it is a pleasure to observe and promote the way they spontaneously move to the unknown and innovate new ways to more deeply connect and grow; belong to themselves and the present moment.

Another fundamental element we explored during these last few months is love and connections which is, as Maturana declared, “the emotion that constitutes social co-existence”.

A connection is the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment. It is an opportunity to enrich each others mind and soul.

Supporting the development of authentic connections and the expression of emotions and feelings, the ability to love themselves, environments, people and resources around them is our main goal. A human being who is able to be connected with themselves, nature and others will change the world, but first and foremost they will be happy, healthy and inspiring people.

Another fundamental point for us to work on every single day is to create deep connections with families and give to children a sense of unity (reach of 100 Languages) and common direction.

From October we will be able to start another powerful and unique learning opportunity for children to extend their connections, sense curiosity, wonder, and empathy with the Cosmo. We will start some excursions around our neighbourhood; two main and significant spaces at the moment: Centennial Park and the Library. Additionally, it will be a wonderful and powerful learning experience to clean up our area with gloves and tongs (plastic or paper along the path).

We firmly believe that these elements are essential to become a happy and aware human being: a future citizen who lives in harmony with the world around themselves and taking care of the environment and other human beings with daily practical acts.

And as Saint-Exupery reminds us in "The Little Prince": *"It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."*

We may develop this invisible super power and spread it around ourselves and please feel free to join us for some excursions or to come in the room and suggest a learning experience to share like Sarah and Kate have. It was an incredible opportunity for all of us to interconnect, build meanings and knowledge together.

With Love,

The Boori Room xx

From the *Jarjum Room*

It seems as though the Jarjum pre-schoolers are still basking in all that post-Vivid glow after our very own Gumnut Vivid Night we hosted in August. We'd like to extend a big thank you to all the families who came for the night as it is always a delight to get together to celebrate children and community. Our *pièce de résistance* was a recreation of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, made entirely out of sticks sourced from Bush Kindy. This ingenious idea was thought up by a Jarjum who wanted to create the bridge akin to what he saw during his Vivid explorations. It was a feat of engineering where the children designed, constructed, collaborated and problem-solved their way into turning a pile of sticks into a magnificent iconic structure.

Our 'Stick Harbour Bridge' is a great reminder of the importance of inviting children to use open-ended natural materials and loose parts in their play. When children engage with such materials, the possibilities to create become endless! This inadvertently supports the growth of their sense of invention and develops a disposition to be creative. We are very fortunate that our Bush Kindy program offers us many opportunities to explore the natural world and to notice the potential in all that we find; whether it's a stick, a pine cone or even a piece of bark.



Speaking of nature, we are welcoming the rainy days that mark the changing of seasons. Dressed in our raincoats and gumboots, the Jarjums have been on a keen lookout for puddles during our Bush Kindy walks. Aside from it being a great deal of fun, splashing in muddy puddles is incredibly beneficial for children. They teach children about resilience, mindfulness and the importance of being in the moment, not worrying about wet socks or dirty clothes. It also develops children's sensory feedback and proprioception awareness as they experiment how fast or hard to stomp in a puddle. It's such a wonderful aspect of our nature program, to be able to fully embrace all that Mother Nature throws our way with such curiosity and wonder.



A Message From Our *Approved Provider*

We celebrate our 10th anniversary in the first week of November. Gumnut Gardens opened its doors the day the stallion Shocking won the Melbourne Cup in 2009. It is extraordinary to think that our first pre-schoolers are now teenagers and the first of our infants are now in double digits. We can but hope that Gumnut Gardens instilled a predisposition to learn in all of these children and embedded a sense of natural justice and environmental awareness.

Sadly we have much sad news. Mimi has resigned to move to Tasmania to be closer to her daughter. While she is officially employed until mid-November she will leave her desk on 26 October and take the balance as leave. We will miss her terribly. Mimi has been the backbone of Gumnut Gardens for the best part of a decade and has worked with us to implement our shared educational philosophy. Her integrity, compassion and dedication to fine education is unparalleled.

The sadder, perhaps terrible news is that the "we" of the Approved Providers must become "I" and "me". Catherine passed away at 9.15 am on 9 October in tragic circumstances. As my wife and life partner of 27 years and mother of our boys I am shocked and numb. All communities sustain sad losses but we have had more than our fair share over the last 12 months.

Yet, as I look out of the window, the Currawongs are still waiting for their feed, the irises are blooming and the first shoots are appearing on our Claret Ash. Every day must be cherished and every moment of beauty appreciated.

Your Approved Provider,

Chris Kimber

A Word From Our *Director*

Dear Families,

I am going to take this opportunity to reminisce. The Cambridge definition of that is “To talk or write about past experiences that you remember with pleasure”.

When I first started working at Gumnuts, there was a huge piece of plastic play equipment out the back. It was like one of those that outdated Councils have, very much something you could climb up and you could slide down. That was it, the opposite to open-ended in other words. Of course I really disliked it, so I set out to persuade the owners Chris and Catherine, to get rid of it.

I remember the day when Catherine told me over the phone, that they both had agreed. I knew then that we were off to a good start and my journey here had begun! We quickly realised that we appreciated and shared a love for a lot of things. Chris' Birthday is on the same day as my daughters, so it is easy for me to remember. Each year he gets a card with a Tree reference. I brought in pictures of various elaborate contraptions from Swedish Early Childhood Journals and needless to say I didn't have to wait long for my beloved Tree House to be built.

Chris was also in his element and was mighty proud when he came up with exactly the right choice of pink. It's called Watermelon and the front gate had to be echoed out the back. Not that we knew much about Feng Shui but it had to flow...



Before I knew it Christmas came around. The old man next door had not responded to any of my attempts of communication. He was the old troll that had got the court order for our noise levels in place. I decided to try and bribe him with some of my Swedish Gingerbread. The children helped me bake and off I went, but only after I instructed the staff to call the police if I wasn't back within the next 20 minutes. No one answered the door but I left the basket with Gingerbread there, they weren't returned but neither was there any ground breaking success. For our End of Year Celebration Santo still had to play the guitar indoors, in the Pre-school, with every child and parent packed to the rafters. I tried (my best!) to sing along and we were all very hot and slightly flustered at the end of the evening.

Chris and I share a love for food and that leads me onto Sandra. She would with time become our Chef and an exceptional part of marketing ourselves as something different. Chris would tell stories about eating (and enjoying?) tripe. Once it was so fresh that the lining of the gut had undigested grass in it. Catherine and I literally couldn't stomach it all and I made her a big glass jar full of meringues for her Birthday. The following week Chris had made their boys entire class come to try. Recipes have been critiqued, shared, but most of all enjoyed.

Not everyone knows that Chris composes music and I was always suitably impressed when my boss asked me to sit down for a few minutes and relax, played me a piece on the piano before starting our meeting to be.

Catherine also had a love for Art and we mused when I stumbled across the painting of Elaine Musgrave. It had to be framed and hung in the hallway.

Gumnut Gardens got its name with a reference to Catherine's relative May Gibbs. Now the tree out the front has grown high, but the Gumnuts are still up there. Wishing you all the very best.

Mimi xx

From the *Gumnut Gardens Kitchen*

Welcome to Gumnut Gardens kitchen, where food is made with love and always has our children as the main priority.

In the previous Gumnut Gazette, I talked about Food Allergies and the new recipe book that we recently added to our collection of nutritional tools. I would now like to extend a little bit more on that topic.

As you know, I have been a Gumnut Gardens member for more than 5 years and every day I do my best to improve a little bit more.

One of the things that challenges me the most is preparing and providing the correct food for all children, with special attention to some particular allergies (anaphylaxis) or specific dietary needs. Food allergies clearly need to be taken seriously but it does not have to be a problem. If we have the proper resources and adjust the recipes to meet our needs, we can still cook tasty family recipes using ordinary ingredients.

One of the questions that I have been asking myself is “Why are food allergies on the increase?” Researchers have been trying to find the reasons behind it over the past years but the frustrating answer is that they still don’t know. There is a big variety of theories that focus on genetics, the environment, our diets and so forth which all can affect the increasing number of food allergy cases, eczema, asthma and other allergy related reactions.

To keep myself well informed and up to date on these topics, I often read articles and watch documentaries about how food impacts on our wellbeing. From that I have learned that we should eat more organic food, whole foods, eliminate processed foods, reduce refined grains, have more vegetables and fruit, embrace good fats such as olive oil, coconut oil, animal fat, eggs and avocados, consume less dairy, choose wild-caught and sustainable seafood, eat fermented foods and have some protein. As a suggestion I recommend paying more attention to food labels when buying goods, especially once your child has been diagnosed with an allergy.

I am trying to introduce more vegetables in daily meals and more wholemeal products. It is going to be challenging but I know we can still make delicious meals with healthy choices!

English Muffins From the *Gumnut Gardens Kitchen*

Makes 12 to 14

Ingredients:

300ml milk

1 times 7g sachet of dried yeast

25g white caster sugar

50g shortening or lard

425g plain flour

20g polenta (optional)

Unsalted butter

Method:

1. Gently warm the milk in a pan till lukewarm or body temperature (37°C). Add the yeast and sugar and stir until the sugar is dissolved. Set aside for a few minutes until the mixture is creamy and starting to froth.
2. Melt the shortening or lard, then in a large bowl, mix the yeast mixture, flour, shortening or lard and a pinch of sea salt into a soft dough. Add a little extra milk or flour, if needed.
3. Knead until smooth and elastic. Transfer to a greased bowl, cover with bees wax cloth and set aside in a warm place to rise for 1 hour, or until doubled in size.
4. Knock back the dough and roll out on a lightly floured surface to about 2cm thick. Using a round cutter or thin drinking glass, cut out circles of 5 to 8cm.
5. Lightly sprinkle a piece of baking parchment with extra flour or polenta. Transfer the muffins to the paper and sprinkle over a little more flour or polenta. Cover with a tea towel and leave in a warm place for 45 minutes to 1 hour to rise.

6. When ready to cook, preheat the oven to 170°C and heat a heavy non-stick pan over a medium heat.

7. Brown the muffins in the pan, in batches, for a few minutes each side, then turn the heat to low and cook for 10 minutes. Transfer to a baking tray and finish them with 5 minutes in the oven, or until cooked through.

8. Cool slightly on a wire track then split open and spread with melted butter, or keep in an airtight tin, to split and toast as needed.

Enjoy!



A Poem From Our *Approved Provider*

Bell Birds, *Henry Kendall*

By channels of coolness the echoes are calling, And down the
dim gorges I hear the creek falling;

It lives in the mountain where moss an the sedges Touch with
their beauty the banks and ledges. Through brakes of the
cedar and sycamore bowers Struggles the light that is love to
the flowers.

And, softer than slumber, and sweeter than singing, The notes of
the bell-birds are running and ringing.

The silver-voiced bell-birds, the darlings of day-time! They sing in
September their songs of the May-time; When shadows wax strong
and the thunder-bolts hurtle, They hide with their fear in the leaves of
the myrtle; When rain and the sunbeams shine mingled together,
They start up like fairies that follow fair weather;
And straightway the hues of their feathers unfolden Are the green
and the purple, the blue and the golden.

October, the maiden of bright yellow tresses, Loiters for love
in these cool wildernesses; Loiters, knee-deep, in the
grasses, to listen,
Where dripping rocks gleam and the leafy pools glisten: Then is the
time when the water-moons splendid
Break with their gold, and are scattered or blended Over the
creeks, till the woodlands have warning Of songs of the bell-
bird and wings of the Morning.

Welcome as waters unvisited by the summers
Are the voices of bell-birds to thirsty far-comers.
When fiery December sets foot in the forest,
And the need of the wayfarer presses the
sorest, Pent in the ridges for ever and ever
The bell-birds direct him to spring and to river,
With ring and with ripple, like runnels whose torrents
Are toned by the pebbles and leaves in the currents.

Often I sit, looking back to a childhood,
Mixt with the sights and the sounds of the wildwood,
Longing for power and the sweetness to fashion,
Lyrics with beats like the heart-beats of Passion;-
Songs interwoven of lights and of
laughters Borrowed from bell-birds in far forest-rafters;
So I might keep in the city and alleys
The beauty and strength of the deep mountain valleys,
Charming to slumber the pain of my losses
With glimpses of creeks and a vision of mosses.

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Gumnut Gardens

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