

Mparntwe Alice Springs Community Foundation Community Builder of the Week



Engaged with our schools

ENCOURAGING, supporting and amplifying positive community action.

Name: David Thomas

Who long have you lived in Alice Springs?

I was born in Alice, lived in Adelaide for about 5 years and moved back home a little while ago.

Favourite sports teams, band or movie and why...

Federals Footy Club- Like a second family in Alice Springs

L.A.B- My bro Arti introduced me to them when we were working together

What role do you play in your community group/activity/action?

I am an Engagement Officer at Braiting

Primary School.

My role is centred around making the school an enjoyable place for the students, building relationships and trying to help lower attenders get to school more often.

Why is your community group/activity/action important?

It's important that school is engaging and fun for every student so they want to come every day. Giving them things to look forward to each day and having a positive and caring relationship makes a big difference.

Why do you volunteer? (or why did you initiate the activity/response)?

It's important to get kids along to school as much as possible so they don't fall behind in their learning or disengage with the school.

Kids who aren't going to school can often fall into bad habits and make poor choices so having them in a supportive and enjoyable environment is really important.

What achievements are you most proud of?

We ran an after school footy clinic in term four across five weeks and had nearly eighty students from year 1-6 take part in the sessions.

Was great to see kids trying something different and having fun with each other.

If you'd like to nominate someone to be the Mparntwe Alice Springs Community Foundation Community Builder of the Week, email editorial@centraliantoday.com.au and let us know who, why you think it would be great for the community to know about what they are doing and how to contact them.



Assistant teacher David Thomas. 375278

Faces of Australia Ted Egan



Teachers and Teaching

I spent only a brief few years as a school teacher, but it was both exhausting and rewarding. I marvel at the skills of some of the teachers I have met over the years; one of the most impressive, in her unique way was Beulah Lowe.

Beulah was a young Methodist missionary who came to the Territory in 1954, appointed to Milingimbi. I met her at that time at the Methodist headquarters in Darwin; she told me of her hopes to apply her linguistic training skills among the First Australian people of Arnhem Land. I followed her career over the next twenty years and had several opportunities to watch her in action. There is no doubt in my mind that Beulah Lowe made an impact that survives to this day in Arnhem Land, where a commendable level of scholarship has been achieved among people we now refer to as Yolngu.

Early in the piece Beulah – as well as providing standard classroom teaching for the children at Milingimbi – began to translate various Christian scriptures into the local language Gupapuyngu (pronounced Goop A Pwing Oo). She obviously had a huge influence on the entire population of Milingimbi, especially the group of traditional Elders she selected to

teach her the local language. The crucial factor was that in learning the local language she followed the excellent policy of the Methodist authorities; that local languages, beliefs and practices should be maintained, to enable the Aboriginal people to accept the presence of missionaries as something positive, rather than follow the deplorable policy in other parts of Australia where traditional languages were banned.

The outcome? Beulah was able to achieve her aim of translating hymns and Scriptures into Yolngu matha (First People's language). That was commendable enough; at the same time she helped her helpers to achieve a commendable level of literacy in their own languages, as well as English. The vital consequence was that her tutors decided that education was the way to go. The various men and women began to assert themselves within their own communities, certainly within their own families, to encourage attendance at schools. So today there are many Yolngu in Arnhem Land who are literate in several local languages, articulate in English, negotiating their way admirably in today's complex world.

Over many years I established friendships with many of these Elders and enjoyed the

benefit of their language skills as District Officer in NE Arnhem Land in the turbulent 1960s, when various mining companies came to the region to mine bauxite and manufacture alumina. A good example was set by Munggurawuy Yunupingu, father of a large family, including Mandawuy and his recently deceased brother, Gumatj leader now referred to as Yunupingu AM, both officially recognised as Australians of the Year.

Munggurawuy delighted in taking me to church services at Yirkalla, where he proudly and sonorously sang hymns in his language Gumatj, translating into English for inept me.

I have for many years asserted that a sensible Australian federal government should establish exchanges with Welsh authorities in the UK. The Welsh had to endure hundreds of years of downright discrimination, persecution from English authorities regarding their traditional language. Not only did the Welsh retain that language – which was a written language before English came into existence; today the vast majority of Welsh speakers also speak better English than the English! It is arguably the best bi-lingual system in the world, particularly at political and academic levels.

At the risk of being contentious it is my firm belief that, in First Australian society, there are probably fewer than twenty individuals who can speak at top scholarly level in both a traditional language and English which – let's face it – is THE official Australian language. A pity. Almost all of these scholars are based in the Northern Territory; the majority of them are women. Of course it must be acknowledged that many thousands of First Australians, particularly in northern regions, speak first languages other than English. Long may it prevail.

In southern states, guilt-stricken governments are throwing buckets of taxpayer dollars to encourage the "rehabilitation" of traditional languages, in areas where there is no hope of success; It is not good enough that Grandma remembers the old word for Kangaroo. A sound idea would be to follow the lead set by New Zealand, where an amalgamation of the various Polynesian dialects brought to Aotearoa is now officially recognised as THE Maori language, available on that marvellous phenomenon, Google Translate. The big achievement for the Kiwis is that they changed their somewhat dirgeish national anthem into a musical masterpiece when they began to sing it in both Maori and English languages.

Central Australian Community Toy Library

TOY LIBRARY :

- ✔ Membership based
- ✔ Toy swapping over 3 weeks
- ✔ Large range of toys & more

TOY LIBRARY PLAYGROUP :

- ✔ Playgroups are for all children
- ✔ Parents can join in the activities
- ✔ Monday - Friday from 9am-11am

TOY LIBRARY KINDY :

- ✔ Children aged 2.5 years (toilet trained) – 6 years of age
- ✔ Programs promote growth and development
- ✔ Tues/ Wed and Thurs 8.30am – 2.30pm. half and full days available



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