



PERTAME SCHOOL

TERM 2 NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2023



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WERTA!

Welcome to our second newsletter of 2023!

This newsletter is to keep everyone updated on a quarterly basis on what the Pertame School has been up to. Firstly, we would like to acknowledge the many Pertame Elders who have kept our endangered language alive so we can see our language thrive again and honour the legacy of our ancestors and family members who have since passed.

The Pertame School is a community-led language revival program empowering Pertame Elders to pass their severely endangered language and cultural knowledge onto the next generations. We grow the next generation of new fluent speakers and community leaders to create a thriving, connected and strong Pertame community.



Alice Springs NAIDOC Innovation Award

The National Aborigines Day Observance Committee (NADOC) was first established in the 1950's and was officially recognised as a public holiday in 1984. Since then it has grown into a week long celebration and into what we all know as NAIDOC. It held every first week of July to celebrate and acknowledge the achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Australia while observing our Indigenous history.

The Pertame School is proud to receive the Mparntwe NAIDOC 2023 award in the Innovation category after receiving an anonymous nomination.

This award meant so much to us all as everything we do for our language aligns deeply with this year's NAIDOC Theme "For Our Elders". It was very special to have two of our Elders present to accept the award. We couldn't be prouder of this achievement to be recognised for all our tireless work on making Pertame strong again. So to the anonymous nominator, thank you whoever you are.





Launch of the Language Nest in New Space at Yipirinya School Child Care

The Pertame School is proudly partnering with Yipirinya School, a community controlled, independent NT school that is governed by an Aboriginal School Council. Yipirinya School generously offered our Language Nest program the use of their vacant childcare centre in-kind, as well as all their campus facilities, bus use and cleaning services.

In July this year we moved locations to the Yipirinya Childcare Centre and held a community open day to let our Pertame community know of our new location, and celebrate this huge upgrade. Over a hundred community members attended the launch. Our Language Nest babies now have a whole fit-for-purpose early childhood building to learn, grow and thrive in Pertame immersion.

We have access to this building until December this year, and are currently developing plans with Yipirinya School for a permanent Alice Springs facility for our early-childhood program.





Continuing the Language Nest

The Pertame Ngetya Untya (Language Nest) is an immersion playgroup for Pertame infants and their parents to be immersed within their language, culture and community to create bilingual, culturally resilient, and community-connected children, ready to transition into further schooling. A Language Nest creates a space where young children can be raised in their Indigenous language through meaningful and culturally-relevant interaction with fluent Elders and community educators, where all communication and activities will be carried out in Pertame. English is left at the door. We are aiming to raise our Pertame babies as first language fluent speakers once again, as our Elders were raised.

"Thank you for creating this opportunity for me and my family. Just remind yourselves how privileged you are to be a part of this, you have this opportunity to keep this language going. Some people don't have their culture or language and that makes them feel like they don't have an identity. So I hope this will go on for many years to come" - Kayla Solomon, Pertame mother

"The language nest is not just teaching us our language but I am lucky enough to have my first paid employment and build work skills while watching my baby grow" - Brittany Swan, Pertame young mother

Our Pertame Language Nest has provided employment and skill development for 7 young Pertame mothers, four grandmothers and two carers to support 17 Pertame 0-5 year olds. We also employ 3 Fluent Pertame Elders that lead and guide the Language and cultural transmission within the Nest. Our young mothers, grandparents, carers and their 0-5 year olds attend the Language Nest 4 days per week, for 4 hours each day. Within the Language Nest our children are not only exposed to Pertame language, but also wholesome meals, hygiene practices, social development, gross and fine motor skill development, health and fitness and community connection with their wider family.

I know the Language Nest is working when I can see my grandsons replacing English words with Pertame words. They are starting to form sentences in Pertame. When I give them commands in Pertame, they go and do it straight away. They already understand it and now they are starting to speak. They lead our food blessing in Pertame, they sing the nursery rhymes all day and they are now asking me for things in Pertame. They now say the Pertame word for spider, snake and different birds instead of the English word. When we say "clap your hands" or "dance" in Pertame, the babies will respond. They are understanding Pertame as their first language. This is all showing me how important immersion is with the little ones, and that we all need to be leaving English alone, and speaking Pertame to our children in the homes as well as the Nest. - Samatha Armstrong, nana







School Holiday Program

During the July School Holidays, we ran a holiday program to continue to engage our Pertame school-aged children in their language and culture. 20 Pertame children attended and learned language through games, stories, art and song.





USA Immersion Trip to Yuchi Immersion School

In July, two Pertame Elders and three staff members travelled to New Mexico, Oklahoma and Montana to connect, exchange and receive training in language and cultural revival from the Navaho people, the Yuchi people and the Salish First Nations People. Our team attended the Lego Foundation gathering in Albuquerque, sat in on the Yuchi immersion school Language Nest in Glenpool then attended the Salish Immersion School Fluency Transfer System training on the Rockyboy reservation. Read Pertame staff member Samantha Armstrong's personal account of her experience on this exchange trip:

The feeling inside knowing you're going to be seeing people you admire and who are now family made the 20hr flight to the USA extra special. Each time I've been over to the Yuchi Language Immersion School in Oklahoma, I leave a piece of me there just as I take a piece of them with me back home. The similarities in language revitalisation between us and the Yuchi made our bonds stronger. Both the Yuchi community and our Pertame community have taken the long, hard and rewarding journey in immersing our little ones in our endangered Indigenous languages. In every language revival step taken and every word spoken, we both share the frustrations, doubts, and criticism, but also the vision to see our languages thrive again. I felt immense joy and happiness returning to Oklahoma a year later and seeing all the Yuchi children growing older and more fluent in Yuchi. For us, their success is a reminder that we still have a fair while to go with our Pertame young ones.

We landed in Tulsa without any hiccups, and made our way to Glenpool ready for the Green Corn Ceremony later that evening. We travelled to a ceremony ground the Yuchi People used for important ceremonies. Each sacred Ceremonial Ground is run by certain Yuchi family caretakers, who host other Yuchi and Creek Nations to partake in dances and songs.

We were welcomed into camps of families to eat traditional meals and to enjoy the ceremony. Their ceremony reminded me of how our ancestors once came together before Colonisation and Christianity. The evening was very special and I loved every minute of it. It's something that I will remember and carry with me forever.

I have seen how much damage has been done to Indigenous peoples globally, whether it was our law and culture, land dispossession, low socioeconomic and health issues or community division. First Nations people were all affected by the annihilation of our mother tongues. Our ancient languages were targeted because we were looked at as heathens who needed to be integrated into Western society and into a faith that was not ours to ever begin with. We lost thousands of years of sacred knowledge and words that can never be spoken on our country or heard by our ancestors who once spoke it proudly. Our shared struggle is our shared strength, so we as First Nations people can empower and inspire each other to fight to keep our traditions strong.



For those who have never seen an immersion school, then you would be in awe of how much language is used throughout the day. The experience for me was indescribably beautiful. In the Yuchi Immersion School, Yuchi is spoken continuously all day everyday to students from 0 year old all the way up to 10 years old. All subjects are taught in Yuchi, including science, art, maths, literacy, and physical activity. Most of the Yuchi students' parents are teachers at the school, who go home and continue to talk Yuchi to their children. It's full cycle, where they never switch off from speaking Yuchi. They are truly living in their Indigenous language.

In the Yuchi Language Immersion School, educators and parents both take pride in teaching and learning as a community. The little ones and adults alike are connected to their language and traditions and more importantly their identity. It's a place where language is first and foremost and no English is spoken. Daily routines consist of introductions, outside prayer to the sun for giving them knowledge and birth. They then do exercise and walks through the woods to identify medicinal and edible plants, showing children certain plants that are toxic.

Morning curriculum activities vary according to age groups but are always consistent with educators and children having one and one time with an adult to ensure they are getting full immersion in language. The activities are rotated in 5 - 10 min intervals, each ending to the sound of the drum. Mealtimes in the Yuchi House are special. A prayer is said before everyone eats. Everyone eating together as a community shows the bonds of a language community thriving in an ever changing society.

Dances and cultural etiquette with young ones are practised everyday, with each child learning songs and their place in ceremonies. The children are guided in each step to make sure they are learning correctly. This ensures their future leaders are confident and brave enough to lead a ceremony on their own. Saying goodbye and leaving with a happy spirit was beautiful. Nothing brought me so much joy as hearing the adults and children being content and at peace with themselves. The Yuchi House has created an environment of love, community and commitment to protecting their language for the future.

It was inspirational to see the Yuchi children embracing their language and culture. It makes us realise our struggles and hopes will be worth all the frustrations, challenges and let downs. By being united as a community, the Yuchi people have made the dream to raise children as first language Yuchi speakers a reality.

We are striving to follow in our sister schools footsteps. The Yuchi community have proved it is possible. We now know we can succeed in ensuring Pertame is the language our babies will speak their first words in. We dream of a future where our children will joke, laugh, sing, play and dream in Pertame. Our precious language is now in the safe hands of our Pertame Elders, mothers, children and their future generations.





Participants of the Salish Immersion Symposium

USA Immersion Trip to Salish Fluency Transfer System Workshop

Leaving our Yuchi family and Oklahoma was sad, but we were off to our new adventure to the Salish Immersion Symposium held at the Stone Childs College in the Rocky Boy's Reservation, Montana. This part of our trip was the most pivotal point for us all. We learnt about the Salish Fluency Transfer System, a game changer as a language revitalisation method to create new second language speakers in the US.

My nervousness on the first day of the symposium disappeared and I was very eager to learn about the new ways of language transfer. The Master-Apprentice method of language revival has been our saving grace. We launched this method in 2020 after training from the Global Indigenous Language Caucus. The method involved pairing a fluent Elder (the Master) and adult learner (the apprentice) together in immersion for 10-20 hours each week. So getting another method adapted for Pertame and learning how to utilise it, was inspiring and reinvigorating.

We listened to a traditional welcome and heard the founding family of the school's story. It was so heartwarming hearing LaRae Wiley and her husband Chris Parkin's personal journey reconnecting and revitalising her mother tongue. Her story resonated with me on many levels. This account was told entirely in Salish by LaRae's son Graham and translated into English by LaRae's grand-daughter Seneca, who is a first language speaker of Salish.

Learning the first steps to creating new speakers of any Indigenous languages using the Salish Fluency Transfer System has ignited the fire within me. I knew it was going to be a significant moment for myself, Vanessa and Shania and our Elders Doreen and Kathleen.

The Principal of the Salish Immersion School, Chris Parkins, gave a presentation on their experience in reviving Salish. It completely resonated with everything we have been doing. His words were our words. We shared his struggles and challenges around immersion, and keeping English out of the space. I loved the presentation from start to finish.

What really stuck with me was the call to choose a domain in your life where you always speak your language, and make a strong commitment to never speak English in that domain again. I immediately had my mind fixated on my grandchildren, especially my 3 grandsons who attend the Language Nest on a regular basis. I made a commitment to talk to them in only Pertame anywhere and everywhere without flooding their ears with English ever again.

When we were told we'd be speaking and telling a story in Salish at the end of our workshop, I was terrified. Their language was so unknown and it seemed impossible. However, learning their language through their method turned out to be an amazing experience. The Salish Fluency Transfer System is a method that makes it easy for a beginner who has little or zero language knowledge to become a fluent speaker. Part of their method was to teach language through their traditional stories, by using pictures to break down words, then build sentences then create an entire narrative. It really inspired us to grasp this methodology and utilise it with the young mothers in the Language Nest.

The two days of the workshop were interactive and required a lot of listening and focussing. Going back to basics as a learner of another language was not easy. Graham, a teach at the Salish Immersion School, ran the two workshops brilliantly and effectively. We all came out of the demonstrations being able to confidently tell a Salish creation story in Salish after never hearing the language before that day.

Reflecting on the Salish Immersion Language Symposium I have gained more insight into language revitalisation and what myself and our Language Nest team is capable of achieving. We, along with our Elders can bring back Pertame into the homes of Pertame families, empowering our young mothers who bring their babies and young children into our Nest. We and so many more of our Pertame Elders and adults are racing against the clock. Many of our speakers are now faced with health issues and dementia. By totally immersing our mums and babies in language within the Language Nest, we are safeguarding Pertame for the future.

Our Master-Apprentice program has always been my salvation in reconnecting with Pertame but after this trip I am more and more confident we can make Pertame strong, supported and flourishing once again with the Salish Fluency Transfer System by immersing our young mums and their children in Pertame and only in Pertame



Pertame team presenting gifts painted by Elders to our Salish and Cree hosts



The Salish Immersion School Founding Family and the Pertame team



Fluency Transfer System Workshop

We have just launched our own Pertame Fluency Transfer System to run alongside our Language Nest. The Fluency Transfer System is a structured adult-focussed language learning program designed to support our young mothers on their journey to fluency so they are able to raise their children in the language.

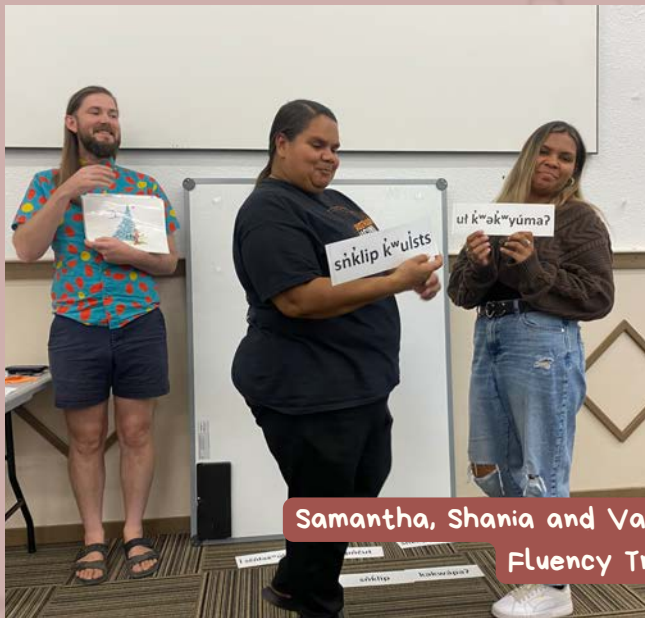
The Salish Immersion School of Spokane in Washington developed a comprehensive, sequenced fluency transfer system and curriculum that is designed to help new learners become fluent in their Indigenous Language. The fluency system and curriculum is composed of six textbooks divided into three levels as well as instructional techniques and materials used to teach the material using full immersion. At each level of the fluency system and curriculum, there is a language book and a literature book. Each book is accompanied by audio recordings and additional materials to aid in learning and teaching.

After returning from our training in Montana, our Pertame team of staff and Elders got to work translating Book 1 into Pertame. Two staff and Elder Doreen Abbott went on a week retreat in Victoria and intensively translated and recorded the entire Beginner Level Book 1 of the Fluency Transfer System with over 600 words, example sentences and Elder audio recordings

We have now restructured the Language Nest so that the first half of the day, half our team are undergoing training in the Fluency Transfer System, and the other half are running the Language Nest with our babies. We then swop the team around for the afternoon. This is ensuring our young mothers are receiving structured language learning at their level, so they are better able to understand and participate in the immersion environment of the Language Nest.



Elder Doreen and Samantha at the retreat in Geelong translating the Pertame fluency transfer system



Samantha, Shania and Vanessa at the Salish workshop learning about the Fluency Transfer System teaching methods





Puliima Indigenous Language Conference Presentation

Seven of our Pertame School staff members attended the largest language conference in Australia, including three young mothers, one Elder, two educators and three of our Pertame infants. The Puliima Language and Technology conference was held in Darwin and had over 900 attendees.

Our team hosted a three hour workshop prior to the conference entitled "Raising Our Babies as First Language Indigenous Speakers Again". The workshop provided a hands-on-training on how to build adult and early-childhood immersion programs, focussing first on working with Elders to develop adult fluent speakers through a Master-Apprentice Program, then empowering young parents to raise their babies as first language speakers within a Language Nest. We shared techniques to help cut English out, to assist other language groups learn and teach within their Indigenous language.

"It was really good to share our story, to hear others and what they are doing and to also connect with other Indigenous Language groups across Australia" - Shania Armstrong, Pertame staff member



Pertame staff team and young mothers presenting at Puliima

Our Pertame staff member, Shania Armstrong, a representative of the National Directions Group for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages also spoke on a panel launching the group's National Action Plan for the Decade. See her inspiring speech addressing the entire conference here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-VhzYbjc7o>



Pertame School in the Media



This Indigenous language has just 20 fluent speakers left. This playgroup aims to save it
At a school near Alice Springs, children and their parents are learning the severely endangered language of Pertame. It's just one example of a...

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-09-03/indigenous-language-revival-program-pertame-alice-springs-nt/102802606?utm_campaign=newsweb-article-news-share-null&utm_content=link&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_source=abc_news_web

The Pertame School has been featured on ABC National News as articles, live interviews and feature stories. Click the images to watch the stories.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dvsQNr0GySo>

Larapinta NITV Documentary

The Pertame School was also featured in the NITV environmental documentary on the Finke River, a significant river that runs through Pertame country. A compelling, six-part documentary series, Larapinta, explores the stories and people that surround one of the oldest rivers in the world, premiering on National Indigenous Television (NITV) and SBS On Demand. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t62okoyQN1c>



CASE STUDY

Language revival across generations – the Pertame School

The Directions Group and Australian Government would like to thank the Pertame School for sharing this story.

The Pertame School is a community-led language revival program growing the next generation of fluent speakers to reinstate our language as the living, breathing voice of our community once again. Pertame is a severely endangered language, with 20 fluent speakers remaining within the older generations. Transmitting the whole body of our Elders' knowledge to the next generations is critical to our language's survival. In 2020, we launched a Master-Apprentice Program, a method of language revival developed by First Nations communities in California that pairs a fluent Elder (the master) with adult learners (apprentices) to rapidly create new fluent speakers of endangered First Nations languages.

Our master Elder and five adult apprentices spend 10-20 hours a week together intensively, in complete oral language immersion. English is left at the door, because our First Nations languages are so much more sacred than just a mere English translation. We wanted to teach Pertame in Pertame, using our original methods of intergenerational knowledge transmission: breath-to-breath language immersion from Elders to youth.

After three years of developing our apprentices through the Program, we are now trialling the Pertame Ngetya Unyo (Language Nest). This is a complete First Nations language immersion playgroup for birth to five-year-olds and their carers. For five days a week, our Pertame babies will be completely immersed in their language, culture and community, to naturally acquire Pertame as their first language.

The Language Nest is led by our apprentices, guided by our Elders and supported by our babies' parents and grandparents. Our babies must speak their first language first, for Pertame to be considered a safe language once again. The research tells us that for a child to be fluent in Pertame, they must be immersed until seven to eight years of age. In the future, the Pertame School will need to pave the way forward, so our children can complete on education up to at least Year 3 in Pertame immersion. The continued future of Pertame depends on it.



Pertame Elders and educators from the country just south of Alice Springs share language with young children as part of the Pertame School Language Nest. Photographed by Vanessa Family, courtesy of the Pertame School.

Case Study in the National Action Plan

The Pertame School was chosen as a case study to represent best practise Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer for the "Voices of Country – Australia's Action Plan for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022-2032" by the Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA) and First Languages Australia (FLA). This report was produced to provide recommendations to the Australian Government on it's response to the UN International Decade of Indigenous Languages.



Pertame Children's Choir Perform at Batchelor Institute Graduation

Our Pertame Children's Choir was invited to open the Batchelor Institute Graduation Ceremony, where Indigenous students across the NT are recognised from completing academic qualifications. Our choir of 11 Pertame children sang 8 nursery rhymes in Pertame after weeks of rehearsals. Our Pertame children were also able to see two Pertame School staff members, Leanne Swan and Shania Armstrong, graduate from their Certificate IV in Training and Assessment at the ceremony, inspiring them for higher education into the future.

You can watch their performance here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXsTg4oo2Lg>





Paul Kelly Visit Singing "From Little Things, Big Things Grow"

Our Pertame community was honoured to meet Paul Kelly and sing his song "From Little Things, Big Things Grow" in Pertame with the writer himself. Our Pertame Choir sang the first two verses in Pertame, and also taught Paul Kelly the chorus. Then Paul finished the song, joining in with the children to sing the chorus in Pertame.



**"Kwekangatyel Kngerra Mangkek"
From Little Things,
Big Things Grow!**



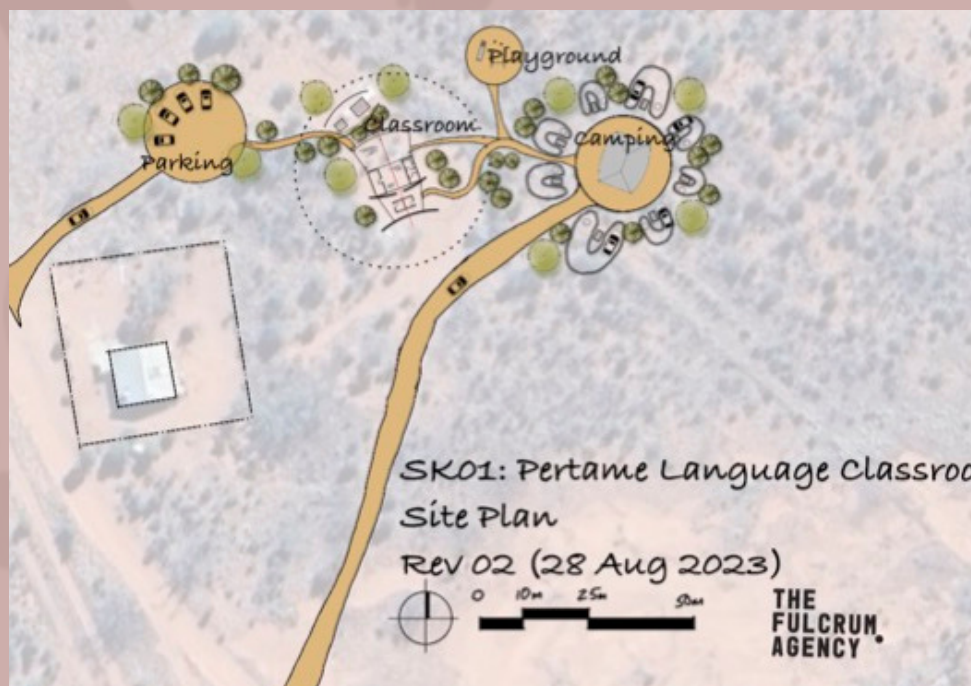


On Country Classroom Construction

Thanks to all the generous supporters who donated to our on-country classroom fundraiser in January, we have now finalised a design and begun construction!

Our on Country classroom hub will include camping facilities, to provide a permanent home for our language on the land that the language came from. The hub would provide an immersive experience, enabling children to look out onto Country and see and experience the words that are being spoken. The project would also foster the rehabilitation of land and reverse the impact the cattle trade has had on our Country. We have plans to train our young people to regenerate the traditional bush foods and medicines, bringing them back into the lives of our children and managing invasive species

This will be a place for all Pertame people. We will leave English at the front door and create the one place in the world where Pertame language will be the dominant language.



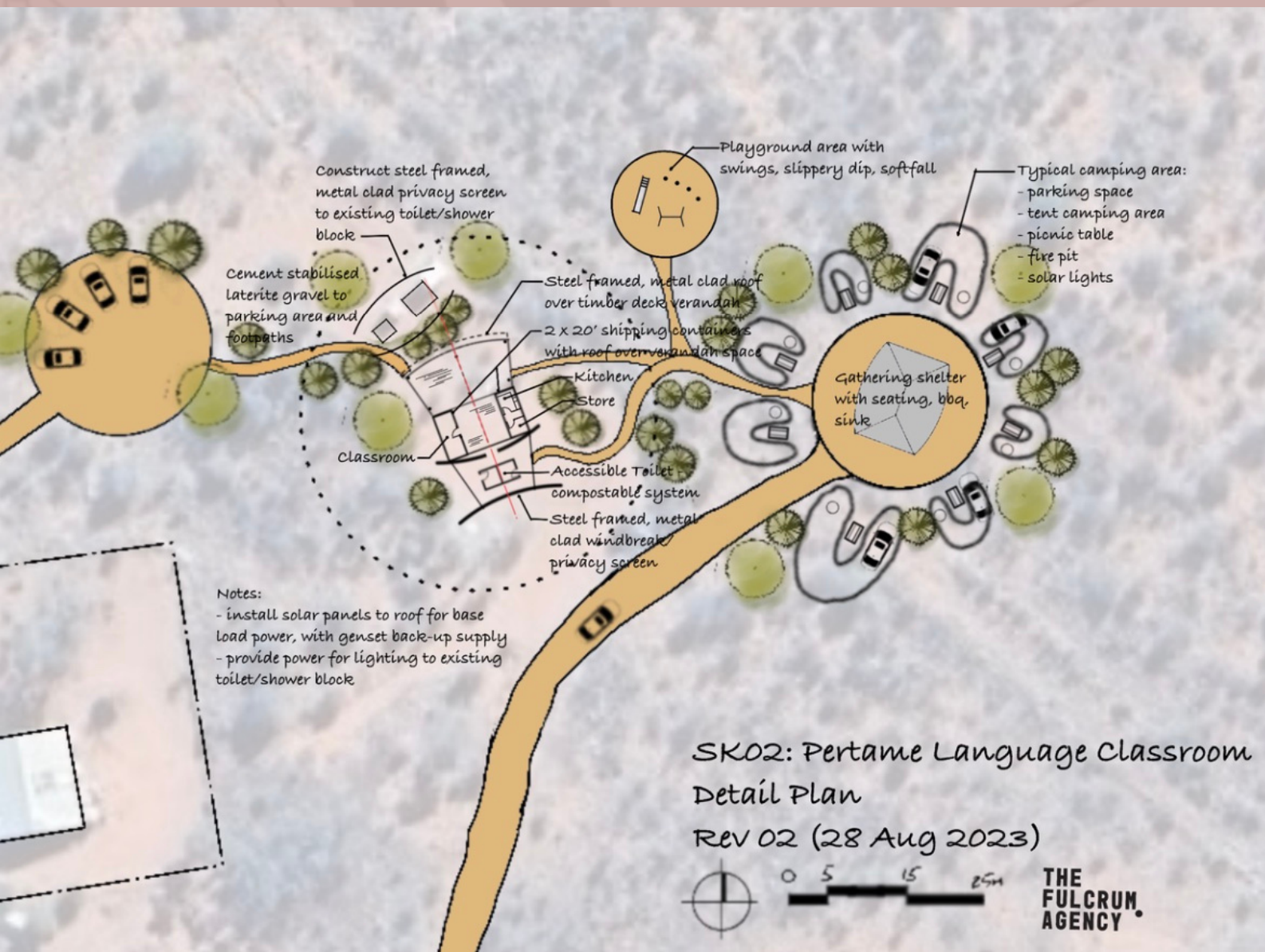
We have been working with the architectural practice, The Fulcrum Agency (TFA), to develop a concept plan and costing for the development of the Learning Hub on Country.

In May 2023 The Fulcrum Agency architects joined Pertame community in Alice Springs and at Boomerang Bore to discuss the Learning Hub requirements and better understand the site constraints and opportunities. Since then, a series of virtual meetings have helped to firm up the project brief and design. The concept plan that emerged from these conversations (refer to drawings) consists of a classroom, toilets and showers, camping facilities and a gathering shelter for BBQs and socialising.

The building systems are largely 'off-the-shelf' components including shipping containers, roof frames and other elements easily procured, delivered and assembled on site by community members, and where needed, skilled trades. The design allows for a staged approach to construction that will better align with available funding.

The Hub will be a light touch on this special Country and will provide safe and comfortable accommodation for people of all ages, most importantly, our Elders.

The Learning Hub will be located at Pertarratenge (Boomerang Bore), 143km southwest of Alice Springs.





Staff Team Building Day

This term we held another Pertame School staff team building day. These days are essential for our core team of community leaders to come together, reinspire each other and build our capacity to work as a strong, united team. The Pertame School is a grassroots program, entirely lead by powerful Pertame women. We have a team of 3 full time Pertame staff, 7 young mothers, 5 Elders and our food and transport support team.

As the first Immersion Language Nest in Australia, we all carry a huge urgent weight on our shoulders knowing that if we are not successful in our efforts, we may lose our Pertame language with our last Elders. This is why we take the time out to build ourselves, so we are able to build up our next generations. We treated our team to a lovely lunch at Ooramina homestead.





Culture Country Learning Days

At the Language Nest, we are nurturing every aspect of our Pertame children's development. Not only are our babies acquiring their language, we are raising them as whole Pertame children, who are strong in their culture, language, country and community. On-country cultural trips are done every Friday to teach the kids about their identity, their kinship connections and sites of significance. When language is spoken out on country, ancestors know that their descendants have come back home and the country gets happy to see them. The child also learn when certain bush foods, medicines and plants are in season and how to gather and hunt them. Everything they are taught always ties back to our ancestors and by continuing our traditional practices with the children, we are ensuring their connection to country continues.







Marra Nthurra Tyenha NWernaka

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