

MEDIA RELEASE

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Binjari books reinforce Indigenous languages matter

With many traditional dialects languishing across Australia, the NAIDOC Week 2017 theme of “Our Languages Matter” is being lived in the community of Binjari as part of a Roper Gulf Regional Council Community Development Program (CDP) project sharing Kriol with the next generation.

For the past two years, female CDP participants have been training to use the Kriol spelling system with Australian National University linguist Denise Angelo, and their determined efforts have paid off with the announcement that nine of the children’s books they have written will be distributed through the Indigenous Literacy Foundation (ILF).

In June, the ILF supported artist and illustrator Julie Haysom to visit the community, about 15 kilometres west of Katherine, and work with the women to create three board books, three picture books and three chapter books.

The six aspiring authors had additional creative support from fellow participants Karen Manbulloo, Halrisha Hodgson, Daniella Carlton, Natasha Waterloo, Tasiana Douglas, Sylvia Birdum, Rozelle Frith, Sarah Lewis and Marisa Smiler-Cairns, who provided paintings and sketches to illustrate the books.

Chief Executive Officer Michael Berto said the project had allowed the CDP participants to develop self-confidence through literacy, adding that he was thrilled to see the final drafts of the books.

“The women speak Kriol mostly as a first language, but like the majority of Kriol speakers, they did not learn to read and write the language at school,” he explained.

“This project has provided an introduction to the way Kriol is written, and the ladies’ confidence with written Kriol has increased as the books took shape.

“I’m extremely proud of what they have achieved, because it is helping to build capacity for their community, and that’s exactly what the Community Development Program is designed to do.”

The books are:

Board books

- *Olkainawan kalawan loli* (Lollies of All Different Colours) by Milly Raymond

- *Yakai! Beibigel!* (Baby Girl! Stop!) by Maureen Hodgson
- *Ola kala en namba* (Colours and Numbers) by Bernadine Booth

Picture books

- *Moli det bigibigi* (Molly the Pig) by Karen Manbulloo
- *Tudei en longtaim* (Now and Then) by Stella Raymond
- *Fishing – lenimbat ola biginini* (Fishing Know-How – Teaching Children) by Marilyn Frith

Chapter books

- *Roki det kenggurru* (Rocky the Kangaroo) by Maureen Hodgson
- *Hanting gada biliken* (Hunting with Billycans) by Maureen Hodgson
- *Hanting gada trekta en treila* (Hunting with a Tractor and Trailer) by Maureen Hodgson

Once the books have been published, ILF will distribute copies to CDP participants and other community members in Binjari, as well as to schools, childcare centres and health services across the Katherine region.

The Council runs CDP projects in its Local Government Area on behalf of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The Federal Government initiative assists jobseekers in remote communities to find employment as they contribute to their communities and gain new skills in the process.

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