

Evaluation of Nawarddeken Academy Part 2: Being researchers and doing research on Bininj Country

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In 2018, a small, soon to be independent school in West Arnhem Land, commissioned a three-year evaluation project to support its emerging role as a school for primary-aged children in the Warddeken Indigenous Protected Area. The evaluation, funded by philanthropists, was designed to build the capacity of local Bininj to engage in research on Country.

In the evaluation of the Nawarddeken Academy, community-based researchers have played a critical role. They have been involved in the design of interview instruments, translation of concepts and questions from English to local language Kunwinjku, interviewing both Bininj and Balanda (non-Indigenous) stakeholders, and the interpretation of findings as they have emerged. In this presentation, based on their work with researchers from the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, community researchers will tell their story about what it means to be a researcher on Country, what they have learned and what they hope to achieve from the evaluation.

Building on this, Batchelor researchers will discuss the implications of their work with community researchers, in terms of homeland education generally, and in terms of the strategic directions of the Nawarddeken Academy. Contemporary research on homeland schooling is very scant, and the evaluation of Nawarddeken Academy, spanning three years from 2018 to 2021, will fill an important gap in the research literature.