



Shepherdson College

40th Anniversary Celebrations

13th to 15th August 2010

**What celebrations!
What fun, joy and
memories!**

The Shepherdson College School Council invited past and present students and staff to come together



at Galiwin'ku on Elcho Island to celebrate the 40 years since the Elcho Island Mission School had been officially named Shepherdson College. The celebrations of 40 years ago were remembered by many former staff and students as a wonderful occasion, in recognition of the devoted work which both the Rev. Harold and Mrs Ella Shepherdson had done in North East Arnhem Land, especially at Galiwin'ku.

Friday was open day at the school – a very different place from that of 40 years ago. Hundreds of locals and many visitors (former staff and students) came to see the school operations. They visited classrooms, looked at old pictures of school classes and activities, then shared in an assembly and sausage sizzle. There was a buzz of excitement as groups met up with past teachers and fellow students and reminisced over old photos. Visitors to the



classrooms were amazed at all the great work the students have been doing and marveled at the resources they have available to them. The children were eager to hear about the school life which their parents and grandparents had experienced in years gone by. At the assembly all the visitors were introduced, some speeches

were made, a group of junior secondary students entertained the assembly with a song and then a group of former students entertained everyone with a rendition of the old Elcho Island School song.



Friday night - the outside stage next to the church was the setting for officially welcoming the visitors. The evening commenced with the church youth group dancing to Christian songs and music activities. All the visitors who had arrived from other places were introduced and welcomed, and the 'old' Junior choir members of the 1960's and 70's got together for some items. Ian Morris talked people through a selection of his slides of Galiwin'ku and the



school from his experiences in the 1960's and early 1970's. A DVD featuring slides and photos of Shepherdson College through the decades, accompanied by local musical artists was then screened. The night was over before all the pictures had been shown and discussed.



Saturday lunch time saw a group of interested people come together for a forum to discuss 'Our Vision for Education – Looking Back, Looking Forward'. Many people were able to contribute their ideas and experiences from over the past fifty or more years. While no major



declarations were made, the current staff, especially Bryan Hughes, the current Principal, received insights as to some of the strengths and weaknesses in education at Shepherdson College over the decades. Bryan spoke positively as to how he has received community support to work together to develop the school, that is trying to meet the educational aspirations of the community first and foremost.

Bands Old and New was the focus for Saturday night celebrations. All the spectators had plenty of room to dance around, or to enjoy just sitting and listening, or moving around and meeting up with old friends. Remnants of the music created by the old Galiwin'ku string band



and Soft Sands band from throughout the decades were featured during the night.

Church on Sunday morning was a time for encouragement in worship. The outside stage was again in use which allowed for the large congregation to participate in worshipful dancing and singing, as well as to take in a strong message from Geoffrey Dhaljanda (Rronan) Garrawurra. Former members of the Senior and Junior choirs of the 60's and 70's, together with former choir conductors Helen (Western) Bulloch, Mary Fletcher and Kevin Davis, concluded the service with fantastic renditions of hymns they had first sung over forty years ago.



Sadly community members were then called to a 'Hearing ceremony', where they were informed of the death of the husband of the current Principal of Gapuwiyak school, Shirley Nirrpurandji. Shirley is also a former student and staff member of Shepherdson College, but had been unable to attend the celebrations as she had other obligations in Darwin.

Everyone then gathered at Dhurrkay Block in the school for the official ceremony. As the crowds were gathering, people were able to get a cup of tea and view historical year books and pictures displayed both on computer screens and as hard copies on boards around the verandah.



Djunadjuna Yunupingu, School Council chairman, then invited everyone to gather around the Dhurrkay Turtle Ampitheatre for

the official ceremony. Kaye Thurlow, the coordinator of the organizing committee read out greetings and best wishes from former staff and from the local member of parliament, who were unable to attend. Kaye presented the principal, Bryan Hughes with a first draft copy of former principal, Don Williams' book 'Methodist Education in Arnhem Land 1916 to 1976'. She thanked all those who had helped her in the organizing of the celebrations and congratulated them on their huge efforts. Speeches of reflection and encouragement were given by Djunadjuna, Kevin Davis, Valerie Dhaykamalu, Rose Guywana,



Helen (Western) Bulloch, and Helen Nyomba (Deputy School Council Chairperson). Bryan Hughes then thanked everyone for participating and helping to make the celebrations such a success.

Following on from the ceremony, everyone was invited to move to the front of the Rose Guywaṇa Administration block where Guywaṇa and Helen (Western) Bulloch **unveiled a replica of the original 1970 plaque**. Prior to the



unveiling ceremony, Christine Birrkinbirrkin, currently a senior staff member of Gapuwiyak School and former student, explained the meaning of the school shield and paid respect to Jack Muṭ pu, a former student, who had won the competition for the logo on which the designing of the shield was based.



Everyone then helped in a final effort of singing the Elcho Island School song and then sang their thanks for food, before participating in the great feast that had been prepared by school staff. The local ALPA store had also provided food, including two pigs, which was cooked and prepared by the Fijian community members.



Celebrations spilt over into the Sunday Night outdoor church service, where Kevin Davis was invited to show his great collection of old photos. The entire DVD of pictures from the past decades accompanied by singing of Galiwin'ku artists was shown. This DVD is now available to be purchased from the CSIS East Arnhem office, along with digital re-recordings of the 1967 Elcho Island School Junior Choir, along with the music of other local groups. Of course the evening would not have been complete without the old choirs again performing some of their favourite songs and hymns.



While most were enjoying these final celebrations on Sunday night, Margaret Miller and Kaye Thurlow were busy providing an heroic boating service, to a group of visitors who needed to return to the mainland at Bularriny, so they could drive themselves back to Darwin by Monday night. The tide was so low at 5 o'clock and the water in the Caddell Straits was so rough that no other boat owners were willing to launch their boats. So the intrepid pair in their 3.4 metre tinny with their 15hp motor, spent 7 hours, mostly by the light of the moon, ferrying Ian Morris, Graeme Sawyer (Lord Mayor of Darwin) and Mally McLellan and all their luggage, from the Elcho Island barge landing to Bularriny. It wasn't until the next night that the two boaties were informed they had passed directly over the top of a 10 foot crocodile when landing at and leaving Bularriny on their second journey.



This story has been compiled by Kaye Thurlow, with pictures gathered from several different people who recorded the events with their cameras. If anyone wishes to use any of the photographs for commercial purposes they should contact Kaye first, to in order to arrange permission. Kaye's contact details are: Postal - PMB 248, Winnellie NT 0822, email - thurlowkaye@bigpond.com Tel 0889705153.

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