

An AWESOME feast

A partnership challenging Goldfields communities



Kalgoorlie Creative Challenge Residency. Photo Max Kordyl

AWESOME achieves an important goal by providing geographically isolated students with access to expert arts teaching which is extremely difficult to replicate within our current resources.

Brian Johnson, Principal, North Kalgoorlie Primary School

Remote communities in Western Australia's Goldfields have accepted a challenge; a creative challenge to be specific. This particular Creative Challenge is a year-round regional arts program developed by AWESOME Arts in partnership with BHP Billiton's Nickel West, in which young people engage in community-based arts projects with the assistance of artists in residence.

With the partnership now in its third year, the 2008 Creative Challenge is 'Feast', a food-art installation project that encourages young people to think creatively and establishes a positive environment for participants to express themselves and their identity. Young people from each participating town work for two weeks to create an installation of a scene that represents their community.

According to AWESOME's Community Development Manager, Amanda Premici, Nickel West's involvement in the program has evolved beyond initial financial support into a rather unique partnership with AWESOME. "A strong relationship developed and regular communications and active participation from Nickel West and employees encouraged Nickel West to take further interest in the program

resulting in them now being the principal partner to the AWESOME Festival for three years,” Amanda told *Artsline*.

Nickle West’s support in the initial stages was vital in providing contact with community relations coordinators for remote Indigenous communities, as well as accommodation and meals for artists. Staff of Nickle West and their families were invited to participate in workshops with artists-in-residence, so they could enjoy a taste of what was in store for the communities.

“Their (Nickel West’s) participation in the program has been well and truly above and beyond the call of duty really,” said Amanda. “They’ve taken artists out to lunches and dinners, on outings, driven them to the communities and brokered relationships with them, and of course they also participate in the celebration day at the end of the project.”

Along the way, according to Amanda, both Nickel West and AWESOME have grown in knowledge, experience and understanding. “From a Nickel West perspective it has shown a corporate company how collaboration

with an arts organisation can create positive change in people’s lives, picking up the threads of positivity, creativity and natural talent within young people and weaving them into a strong and vibrant tapestry of trust, confidence and respect that builds and strengthens the very fabric of that community,” she said. The success of the partnership has also given Nickel West the confidence to subsequently partner with other Western Australian arts organisations, including deckchair Theatre, STEPS Youth Dance, West Australian Symphony Orchestra and the Perth International Arts Festival.

The partnership kicked off in 2006 with Bike-Lab, a sculptural project using recycled bike parts and meccano-like pieces. This was followed in 2007 by a contemporary dance and sound project called ‘Make Your Move’. Participating communities are recognised and their work showcased at the Creative Challenge Exhibition during the annual AWESOME International Arts Festival for Bright Young Things.

On the final day of each residency the artists, community members and

BHP representatives come together to share and celebrate the achievements of the young people in the communities. The celebration plays a huge role in inspiring and empowering both the young participants and the wider community to participate in community life.

Positive feedback from participants and stakeholders, as well as widespread publicity, has enabled the expansion of the program. Relationships with community stakeholders have strengthened and anecdotal feedback to Nickel West has been encouraging, demonstrating that the communities value the program highly. A recent Social Impact Assessment conducted in Nickel West communities has also recorded positive recognition from stakeholders, commenting that the program is ‘achieving immeasurable results’.

The Department of Culture and the Arts supports AWESOME Arts Australia as a multi-year funded organisation.



For more information on AWESOME Arts please visit www.awesomearts.com
The 2008 AWESOME International Arts Festival for Bright Young Things is coming soon.
Read more in News and Highlights (page 20).