

Term 1 Campfire Conversations Report

Wednesday, 1 April 2026

Barbbunin Beek Gathering Space

The first of four planned termly gatherings for First Nations students and their families across the Banyule Nillumbik Schools Network (BNSN) was held on Wednesday, 1 April 2026 at the Barbbunin Beek Gathering Space in Heidelberg. The gathering aimed to strengthen cultural identity, foster meaningful connections, and build relationships between students, families, schools, and the wider community.



2025 Cooper

Students, families, and staff from a wide range of BNSN schools attended, including Rosanna Primary School, Ivanhoe Primary School, Montmorency South Primary School, Viewbank Primary School, Watsonia Heights Primary School, Heidelberg Primary School, Watsonia Primary School, Bundoora Primary School, Macleod Primary School, and Olympic Village Primary School, among others. The event brought together approximately 50 students and their parents, marking a strong beginning to the year's program of gatherings.

Twenty-five students from Prep through to Year 6 travelled together by bus, which visited seven schools across the network. Upon arrival at the Barbbunin Beek Gathering Space, they joined an additional group of students already present. This shared journey and coming together helped establish a sense of excitement and belonging among participants.

The success of the gathering was made possible through the collaborative efforts of the Banyule Council Youth Team, staff from the Barbbunin Beek Gathering Space, Rosanna Primary School, Olympic Village Primary School, and a number of dedicated volunteers. This collective approach reflects the shared responsibility and commitment to supporting First Nations students and their families across the network.

The afternoon began with a welcome and Smoking Ceremony led by Wurundjeri man, Thane Gardevey. He provided those gathered with a rich account of the history of local Aboriginal groups, grounding participants in Country and deepening their understanding of place. He also introduced Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung language, encouraging students and adults to consider the meaning behind each word and to engage in respectful



pronunciation. Students, families, and staff were invited to participate in the Smoking Ceremony, creating a shared cultural experience.

Following the ceremony, students engaged in a variety of creative and cultural activities. These included decorating tote bags using traditional Aboriginal symbols, alongside personal symbols representing important people and aspects of their own lives. Participants also created patterned plaques using stamped designs, which were then painted and decorated. These activities provided opportunities for cultural expression, creativity, and storytelling, and were enjoyed by all involved.



In addition to the structured activities, students made use of the newly refurbished basketball court and play area at the gathering space. These informal spaces supported social interaction, play, and further connection among students from different schools.

All enjoyed a sausage sizzle at the end of the event!

A significant outcome of the gathering was the opportunity for meaningful connection among community members. Conversations between Banyule Council staff, Department of Education representatives, Aboriginal leaders, and First Nations families contributed to a strong sense of community and shared purpose. The event highlighted the importance of connecting through culture as a way to strengthen identity, belonging, and relationships.

The Term 1 gathering represents a highly successful beginning to the 2026 program. It established a strong foundation for continued engagement and collaboration, and the BNSN looks forward to building on this momentum in Term 2 and throughout the remainder of the year.

Jeff Jackson
Principal
Rosanna Primary School