



## POETRY IN UNEXPECTED PLACES

### POEMS IN FIRST LANGUAGES CREATE A SOUNDSCAPE THROUGH WATER

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**MEDIA RELEASE**  
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Yanangunla, barayangunla mari bula  
Let's move together and sing out loud  
Naawala, mimugurubuni, yanagn un, ngyinarigai gana manuwu  
Look, do not close your eyes, we walk together, with feet on fire ~ from 'The Wounded Brave' by Joel Davison

**Cookaroo Flow**, an inventive new artwork just installed at the **Royal Botanic Garden Sydney** celebrates the poetry in language created by First Nations students from Sydney and the Northern Territory.

Commissioned by **Red Room Poetry**, **Cookaroo Flow** is the first public iteration of **Flow**, an international audio installation project by artist **Allan Giddy**. It extends young poets' creative voices whilst buoying **Red Room Poetry's** vision to elevate the visibility and accessibility of contemporary Australian poetry, by publishing in unexpected places.

**Poetry in First Languages (PIFL)** – a project developed by Gunai poet **Kirli Saunders** – celebrates, shares and preserves knowledge of First Nations languages and culture through poetry, music, dance and art. **Cookaroo Flow** provides an evocative public platform for the creative outcomes produced by First Nations students who took part in PIFL workshops on Gadigal land in November.

The voices of the First Nations students were recorded by **Giddy** when they met on Gadigal land at the Garden on 5 November. The day brought 40 students together from Northern Territory and Sydney's Alexandria Park Community School to explore culture through language, poetry, art, bush tucker and medicine and Traditional Indigenous Games. The language and poetry workshops investigated Gadigal language with the students also sharing and creating in Anmatjere/Warlpiri and Western Arrernte languages. Students were encouraged to write and express in their own First Languages. **Giddy's** resulting audio installation features a soundscape created from the poetry written and spoken by the students in response to country on Gadigal land, in Gadigal, Anmatjere/Warlpiri and Western Arrernte languages.

Visitors to the garden can experience the artwork by holding one of the wooden sticks provided against their ear, while resting the other end in the water, on the bottom of the garden's creek. As they listen, the natural current of the creek will connect nature, history, emotions and the expressions of the young poets' contemporary lives, carrying their voices out to sea.

**Poetry in  
Meaningful Ways**

Red Room Poetry

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*“The children’s words, recorded and edited into a soundscape, will be ‘released’ into the water to flow to the oceans, where they will (metaphorically) meet and mingle with those of other First Nations students – in Australia and around the world – who take part in later iterations of Flow.” ~ Allan Giddy*

Gadigal poet and Language Custodian, Joel Davison and Red Room’s Kirli Saunders alongside Josh Brown, Aboriginal Programs Coordinator for the **Royal Botanic Garden Sydney** worked together with **Giddy** to create the cultural day and poetic finale. Other partners included National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy (NASCA) and the Art Gallery of NSW (AGNSW).

*“Working with Joel at the Gardens and Allan Giddy has been a pleasure too; Joel brings new magic to language learning and I know the students took so much away. Allan’s magic was to create this incredible artwork to lift and spread the expressions of culture, language and country. It is profound and I can’t wait to see and hear the young poets’ voices as they flow.”*  
~ Kirli Saunders

**Poetry in First Languages (PIFL)** builds connections to country, language and community, empowering students to feel pride in their cultural identities. PIFL supports First Nations students in creating poetry in first languages by connecting them to First Nations poets, Elders and Language Custodians on country. The focus is to strengthen the connection of First Nations students to country, language and community in order to empower students to feel pride in their cultural identities, resulting in enhanced wellbeing overall. The project launched this year and will continue through to 2020 with a wide range of partners, locations and First Nations poets and Language custodians.

**Where: Royal Botanic Garden Sydney.** The installation can be found at the stream near to Sydney Fernery, and at the pond next to Botanic Gardens Restaurant and Kiosk

**Photo Opportunity:** 5 December, 2.30pm with 4 x NASCA and Alexandria Park Community School students

**Installation dates:** 1 December 2018 - 28 February 2019

**More information and our list of supporters:** <https://redroomcompany.org/projects/poetry-first-languages/>

**More information about Allan Giddy’s Flow project:** <https://en.iyil2019.org/events/cookaroo-flow/>

**Available for interview:**

- Allan Giddy, artist
- Kirli Saunders, RR Poetic Learning Manager, creator of Poetry in First Languages
- Sally Marwood, RR Director of External Relations
- Josh Brown, Aboriginal Program Coordinator, Royal Botanic Garden Sydney
- Student poets (subject to availability)

**Red Room Poetry (RR)** is one of Australia’s leading organisations for the creation of new Australian poetry by established, emerging and student poets. With a focus on making poetry accessible to everyone, RR seeks to reflect the diversity of Australian voices through various styles of poetry and through a range of languages and mediums. RR creates poetic arts projects and learning programs through collaborations with a broad spectrum of poets, schools, communities and partners for positive social impact.

**Allan Giddy** is a New Zealand-born artist who lives and works in Sydney. His pioneering use of alternative energy systems and light in ‘time-based sculpture’ began in 1992. Over time his practice has expanded into the public domain, specifically public sited ‘active sculpture’ aimed at the reinvigoration of public spaces. Allan is one of Australia’s foremost proponents of sustainable energy systems, electronic interconnectivity and interactivity embedded in the physical art object. Allan’s work has been shown in ISEA and TISEA (International Symposia on Electronic Art), at the Tate Modern, and numerous other venues internationally, from Canada and Finland to Greece, Vietnam and Bulgaria. In recent years he has completed a number of large public commissions, in Australia and internationally, often working off-grid and with sustainable energies.

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