

The Millner Primary School Community

Darwin and its surrounding suburbs are built on the traditional lands of the Larrakia people. Rapid Creek forms one boundary to the suburb of Millner. The creek has always been an important place for Indigenous people for hunting and camping, as a meeting place and source of fresh water and a place for collecting bush tucker and medicines. Following the development of public housing in the northern suburbs during the 1960s, the creek continued to be well used. Uncle Bill Toy, a former tutor, football coach and important all rounder at Millner Primary School remembers, "I've lived in the Rapid Creek area for 38 years mainly because of Millner Primary School. I grew up in Millner and I've been here ever since. I spend a lot of time in Rapid Creek and Millner so why would I want to go somewhere else when I love where I am?"

Millner Primary School is an integral part of the suburb which gets its name from Dr James Stokes Millner, who was Colonial Surgeon and Protector of Aborigines in the township of Port Darwin between 1870 and 1875. He was a man who treated local Aborigines fairly, respecting their social organization and customs and demanding that other settlers do the same.

Fairness and respect for cultural difference have been fundamental to the ethos of Millner Primary School over its forty year history. The rich cultural diversity of the students at Millner is considered a real strength with nearly half of the

School population being of Indigenous descent together with a high percentage of students from non-English speaking backgrounds. English as a Second Language teachers and an Aboriginal and Islander Education Worker (AIEW) have developed programs within the School to meet the specific needs of these children.

The School actively celebrates NAIDOC week and Harmony Day and has a well recognised Asia in Schools program. The school services the local Indigenous communities of Kulaluk and Minmirama with students bussed daily to and from the School. The School regularly holds excursions to Kulaluk where Larrakia culture and history, bush tucker and the coastal environment are discussed.

The School caters for individual difference but also promotes unity and pride in the School, Territory and country. We live our vision statement: 'Building Respect and Achieving Together'.

Past Principals and teachers constantly applaud the deep commitment of teachers and support staff to Millner Primary School - many working far beyond their duty statements or public service hours. It is impossible to recognize all of Millner's outstanding workers in this forum. Many have devoted a decade and more to the School. Mr Levy Sumague arrived in Australia in September 1972 as a young teacher from the Philippines. After two weeks in Sydney he was sent to Darwin. Not knowing what to expect he was told to make

sure he took his shorts!! Thirty-six years later he is still king of the piano and song in Millner's early childhood area. Mrs Jan Cooke has spent 25 years teaching at Millner Preschool, engaging with and bringing out the best in every small child and preparing them well for life at 'big school'.

Students from the School regularly participate and perform with distinction in a range of activities including The Beat, North Australian Eisteddfod, national Mathematics Competition, Festival of Darwin, Royal Darwin Show, the Arafura Games opening ceremonies, debating competitions, recorder 'Blow Ins' and chess tournaments.

Despite Millner Primary School's small population, the student's individual and team sporting achievements are exceptional. The trophies in the library are testament to this. Many of our students are selected in the NT representative sides and at the cluster level in various sports. As a school, Millner has fielded highly competitive sides in Australian football, basketball, soccer, squash, rugby league, hockey, netball, cricket and softball. Students have also participated in regional athletics programs and interschool cross country events.

There are many significant events that happen within each school year. Selected in the Millner timeline are just a few which stand out in Millner's illustrious history. Mentioning the individual achievements of staff and students and the struggles and victories of the School over the past forty

years would take a whole book. No doubt there are some glaring omissions and we apologise for that. What is clear however, is that the School would not be the School that it is without the continued support of the Millner community.

Millner Primary School

1968-2008

1968 Millner Primary School opens in February with an enrolment of 326 students. 15 classrooms surround a quadrangle. It was the wet season and with no grass planted, the students were forbidden to play in the mud!

1970-71 Three demountable classrooms are built and work commences on the School oval. In 1971, the opening enrolment is a massive 524 students.

1974 Cyclone Tracy devastates the city of Darwin on Christmas Eve. The School's demountables are demolished and many of the staff and students are evacuated from Darwin, some never to return.

1975 Students from Alawa, Millner, Rapid Creek and Nightcliff Primary Schools combine at Alawa Primary School. However, numbers are too great and students are relocated

to Millner Primary School. The resulting combination of schools is named NIMIRA (Nightcliff, Millner and Rapid Creek) and remained operational for the whole of 1975.

1976 NIMIRA reverts to Millner Primary School. The whole School is air conditioned and the library, an additional top floor Learning Area and the Early Childhood Unit are built. The Preschool is located 500 metres away on Robinson Road and is not part of the Primary School until the early 1980s.

1977 School library is officially opened in May with guest speaker Marshall Perron. Children participate in NT Trade Fair and win many prizes in the art and craft section.

1979 Millner students raise money for Kampuchean refugees through the sale of comics, books, mangoes and biscuits.

1980 Millner Primary School is officially recognised as a Disadvantaged School and is granted funding for additional teaching staff, teacher aides, a liaison officer, resources and a long-awaited hard-court area.

"... [in 1980] parents rallied around with the formation of a School Council and so began the many fund raising activities of fetes, mini fetes, film nights, raffles and cake stalls. These activities brought the Millner community together as never before. Parents, staff and students worked with a common purpose - make Millner the best school from which everyone would benefit" - Rita Bullock, Principal.

1981 Millner Primary School wins a first in the Bougainvillea Festival Parade. Students raise \$1700 for the Multiple Sclerosis Read-a-thon. The Parent Association fundraises to build the pergolas in the quadrangle, erect shade for the infant courtyard, buy bicycle racks and plant trees and shrubs around the School.

1982 Students participate in the October celebrations at Raintree Park marking the visit of Queen Elizabeth 2 to Darwin. Students and staff begin work on the quadrangle's rainforest. Mr Richter is farewelled after 7 years as Assistant Principal.

1983 Mrs Kenworthy is farewelled after nine years as Millner Preschool Teacher.

1984 Principal Rita Bullock pays tribute to Millner staff in her last report to the School, "They come from different parts of the world, different training courses and different schools yet the staff is a happy and united one, patient in the face of difficulties and dedicated to helping each student in the school".

1985 A School Discipline Policy is developed in conjunction with staff and parents.

"My magnificently marvellous mob of mango munching Millner monsters!" - Principal Ron Abbott addresses the assembly.

1986 The School wins a long battle to have fencing installed at its rear to mitigate the various threats posed by hazardous areas on the old Darwin waterslide site on Bagot Road. A school caretaker is established on site.

1987 A palatial cubby house is built at the Preschool and the Parent Committee unanimously vote to keep Millner Preschool in its current position.

Concern over proposed senior staff changes within the Primary School prompts the School Council to petition the Department of Education, arguing that Millner's excellent reputation, despite its high proportion of disadvantaged students, was the product of a 'stable staff with a common aim and the ability to work as a team'.

1988 Parents, children and School staff celebrate the School's 20th birthday by dressing in fancy dress and participating in various activities. A metre square birthday cake, beautifully iced by Mrs Lynette Hopkins, is cut at lunchtime. \$6000 worth of new playground equipment is assembled by staff and parents in the early childhood playground. Parents also gifted the beautiful palm garden at the School's entrance. Students Donald Moodie and Jo Ann Tomlinson (assisted by parents Margaret Moodie and Peter Cooke) edit 'The Millner Mag' to commemorate the special day.

Also in 1988, Millner's Scottish dancing group performs at the Youth Expo at the Darwin Showgrounds and a School Standards Committee is established which brings together parents, teachers, Department Officers and students to consider all aspects of the functioning of the School, especially discipline and put it down in policy form.

1989 Languages other than English (LOTE) program introduced with the teaching of Indonesian to students. Mrs Cogniat leaves Millner after 17 years teaching. Children from Ludmilla Special School (now Nemarluk) are integrated with Millner. Year 6/7 participate in the Telstra adopt a telephone box, designing artwork for the Sabine Road box and naming it 'Nature's Beauty'.

1990 The School's recycling centre is forced to close because the central recycling facility at Winnellie is shut down. Between 1988 and March 1990 glass, aluminium cans, paper, cardboard and soft plastics are recycled through the School.

1991 The School is threatened with closure. The whole School community comes together to put a case to the Minister for Education that the quality of education and community service offered by the School is so superior that there would be great disadvantage to all in the closure of the School. They are successful and the School remains open.

1992 The School's exterior is repainted and the basketball court resurfaced. Several family film nights are held at the School.

1993 "The Greedy Emu Woman" is performed by Preschool children as part of Millner's International Year of Indigenous People celebrations. Mathematics Teaching and Learning Project (MaTLAP) instigated and the School hosts an interschool Mathematics Quiz. The Millner Academic and Cultural Bridging program sees the employment of two Indigenous workers to assist Indigenous students. Millner is selected as a 'magnet school' responsible for identifying and sharing exemplary practices in the teaching of Asian studies.

School Houses - Arafura, Buffalo, Coomallie and Melville are replaced by Jabiru, Crocodile and Dingo.

1994 First Millner Maths fair held at the School.

1995 Brenda Shields, Aboriginal Education Liaison Officer at the School receives a National Award recognising her outstanding service to Indigenous Education. Greening Australia design a grounds plan to improve the appearance of Millner School.

1996 Colourful murals, a ceramic crocodile billabong and sculptures are created by the students with the guidance of Alison Dowell under the Artist in Schools Program.

1998 Millner School celebrates its 30th birthday with a dinner dance and fete.

1999 Millner is awarded a prestigious National Literacy Award for Literacy and Numeracy Achievement in their 'Gateways to Literacy' Program. The program targets oral language development, sensory motor development and phonological awareness development.

The Hon. Peter Adamson opens the Millner Primary School Computer Laboratory named after the late Lesley Foster who, as Principal, instituted the establishment of Information Technology facilities within the School.

2000 Millner wins the 'Outstanding Whole School' award in the Territory Tidy Towns and Schools Awards and is a finalist in the Best Urban School Competition.

2001 Work begins on the School's new Administration Block which is officially opened in June 2002 by the Minister for Education, Syd Stirling. Torres Strait Islander dancers, staff, parents and forty students participate in the Festival of Darwin Parade winning first prize in the 'best community group' section for their amalgamation of Aboriginal culture with the "You Cannot Stop the Music" theme! Middle Primary Students win a Dept of Primary Industry and Fisheries Award for their decoration of mesh mud crabs and crocodiles.

2002 Millner's Senior and Junior choirs produce two audio CDs at the NT University's recording studio.

2003 The School continues to run the Minmirama Aboriginal Community Playgroup for pre-preschool aged children. The project encourages young children to experience play activities similar to those offered at preschool and advises parents of the importance of preschool education.

2004 Millner School adopts Eraulo Village in the highlands of East Timor as a sister school. School Representative Council raises funds to buy soccer balls and pumps for the students. Mrs Sandra Tune retires from the canteen after serving the School for 24 years as the canteen manager but also on the parent council and in other capacities.

Nana Gwen celebrates her 94th birthday at Millner Preschool. Nana Gwen has visited the Preschool weekly for 18 years and every Christmas presented the students with a gift. In 2001, Nana Gwen was one of two School volunteers chosen to represent Millner at the National Peoplescape Celebration in Canberra which recognised the remarkable and valued contribution, volunteers make. Nana Gwen's generosity to the School is a source of inspiration to us all.

The Primary School's new playground facility is dedicated to the ANZACS and past and present members of the Australian Defence Forces. The ANZAC dedication ceremony was

performed by Wally Everett MBE a well-known WW2 veteran who resides in Millner.

2005 TIO donates 45 computers to the School and a grant of \$48,000 from the Commonwealth Government under the Investing in our School program is used to build the School's IT resources. A JAPE sponsorship agreement is signed which provides \$2000 per year for 10 years. The Red Cross Good Start Breakfast Club begins at Millner. A new Indigenous Parent Committee, ITAS tutors and homework centre program is coordinated by AIEW Dominic Grant. Six short films from Class 5/6 become finalists in the Darwin Festival's 'Fist Full of Films'.

2006 The Minmirama/Kulaluk/Coconut Grove Bus Service is established. New playground equipment is installed at the Preschool and a rainforest planted around it. Millner commences 'Age of Entry Trial' with intake lowered to 4½ years into Primary and 3½ into Preschool. Mobile Computer Lab established with 20 laptop computers.

2007 RESPECT is the theme of the year! Millner wins the National Healthy Active Australia Award of \$12,000 and the Power and Water Authority Melaleuca Award for the School's 32% reduction in electricity use in the 2006 school year. The School receives a \$1 million grant to upgrade the Assembly Hall. Security fencing and screens installed around the School using Investing in School funds.

2008 Educating Remote Indigenous Children in Urban Settings (ERICUS) is a unique five part strategy developed and piloted by Millner School between June 2008-June 2009. "Small Steps" is an innovative program started by the School to target 5 week learning goals for students. The Accelerated Literacy Program is adopted as a whole school approach to achieve better literacy outcomes for students. Upgrading of the assembly hall nears completion.

Principals of Millner Primary School

Bernie Stafford 1968

NC Young 1971

Alan Hall 1974

C Beresford 1975

John Anderson 1976 - March 1977

Ian Richter 1977

Rita Bullock 1978 - October 1985

Ron Abbott 1985 - 1990

Gary Yates 1991 - 1992

Lesley Foster 1993-1994

Ron Argoon September 1994-2004

Terry Quong 2005-2009

Michael Jones 2009 -

*Researched and compiled by Samantha Wells, Parent,
Historian and School Council member.*