

Making movies in Aurukun, Far North Queensland, has encouraged children to come to school

By Deborah Arentz

# Movie making project boosts school attendance



Students from Arukun get familiar with high end cameras

Working with a Melbourne film crew, children living in the isolated community of Aurukun in Northern Queensland have crafted a unique multimedia presentation which tells the captivating story of life in a remote wilderness.

The students from Aurukun Primary School were given the opportunity to tell their story through a collaborative venture initiated by their principal, Richard Barrie, Melbourne film director, David Vadivelloo and Croc Festival executive director, Peter Sjoquist.

The six-week project gave the students an opportunity to learn about multimedia technology and the art of telling stories using music, animation and video production.

David Vadivelloo has spent the past 12 years developing storytelling techniques for young people in marginalised communities. It is these children who are not represented in modern media like television, the arts or film and David's aim is to provide a multimedia platform which reflects their identity and cultural perspective.

The students involved in the latest storytelling project from Aurukun are in Years 6 and 7. They live in one of the most remote regions of Northern Queensland, in a pristine wilderness. Unfortunately, this is a community also plagued with extreme social problems including alcohol abuse, child neglect, domestic violence and high unemployment.

As well as providing an education, the school offers its students life support by serving breakfast, lunch and afternoon tea to ensure they receive at least two nutritious meals a day.

Because of the complex social issues, absenteeism is high. For the Richard Barrie, that means thinking outside the square to find new ways to encourage children to come to class and learn.

The filmmaking project proved to be one of those amazing turning points, a motivational 'spike' for the children. It also led to 31 students from Years 6 to 10 traveling to perform at this year's Croc Festival on Thursday Island thanks to funding provided by the Telstra Foundation.

Croc Festival, an innovative performing arts and educational program for primary and high school students, is held annually in regional and remote communities around Australia over three days at eight venues. The festival inspires and encourages indigenous and non-indigenous students and communities to celebrate youth and culture.

From a classroom perspective, the filmmaking project was managed through the successful *Bound for Success* curriculum strategy which teaches children essential numeracy and literacy skills using real life learning. Mr Barrie describes the curriculum as best practice with long lasting benefits for all students. He said this latest adventure was life changing for many of the children, teaching them the true value of a quality education.

'The filmmaking project showed these children what they are capable of achieving and it also gave them some insight into the power of learning,' he said. 'They realised that, with an education, you can have a future – you can have a good life with real rewards. They learnt new skills using technology and they were learning in a way which interested them. Really, they came out of the experience feeling confident and proud.'

He said the local elders also supported the project, these are people who grew up under the McKenzie Missionary era and appreciate that an education can open doorways.

For Richard Barrie, working with the students at Aurukun is a privilege. This is his third assignment in a remote community after previously teaching in Saibai, an island 4 km from New Guinea and on Moa Island with the Torres Strait Islander people at St Paul's State School.

## WIPE OUT HEADLICE





Discount  
for groups of  
3 or more\*



In school checks available  
Headlice removal in your own home  
Prevention & treatment products to purchase  
No harsh chemicals • Friendly team • Privacy assured

% of your treatment cost donated to your school\*

Call BugBusters

on 1300 657 594

www.bugbusters.net.au

headlice  
removal  
service

\*conditions apply

038156253-H81



Melbourne film makers assisted on the project

He says his role as principal in a remote school provides fresh insight into the rich tapestry of life.

'I learn something new every day,' he said. 'This has been one of the most rewarding chapters of my life. Working in a remote community is enriching beyond compare and the more you put into this job, the more

you get out of it.'

In addition to the filmmaking project, Aurukun has another program running through the Bendigo Bank to encourage students to come to school. If they come five days out of five, they receive \$5 deposited into their bank account. If they come to school 100% of the time for a full term, the students get a new push bike and a helmet.

It is an obvious incentive to do the right thing but Richard Barrie said the project also teaches the students about responsibility, the real economy and the benefits of saving. The school now has a core cohort of about 60 students who come to school regularly.

When asked why he chooses life in the Cape, he can't help but laugh.

'Where else in the world would you want to live?' he said. 'I love what I do. This is the sort of place where you reap what you sow and I tell the teachers that. To be successful, to make any inroads, they have to be here

for the right reasons. We are very fortunate that we have a dedicated, enthusiastic staff at the moment, who are here for the right reasons, the children and that is making a huge difference.

'This is paradise, a place with its own magic and beauty which so few people get to experience. I count myself as being one of the lucky ones.'

## ESSI Money - Earning, Saving, Spending and Investing



ESSI Money is an online game that allows participants to achieve an understanding of the basic concepts surrounding financial management, in the areas of Earning, Saving, Spending, and Investing – ESSI!

ESSI Money is the second financial literacy teaching resource developed by the Financial Basics Foundation with the assistance of teachers from around Australia and e-learning game developers Liquid Interactive.

The game is dynamic quest for financial success – requiring each player to simulate real life choices about their finances in order to avoid financial ruin. It is a structured exploration of financial concepts using mentors and educational scaffolding to create a valuable learning experience.

It speaks to students in a language they understand and uses an interface rich with interactive technologies such as mobile phones, email and tools for online buying and selling. ESSI Money empowers young people by encouraging budgeting and goal setting, and provides experience with concepts such as credit, shares, interest payments and even scams.

**ESSI Money is available free of charge to Australian secondary schools by following the links and completing the registration form on our website: [www.essimoney.com.au](http://www.essimoney.com.au)**



[www.financialbasics.org.au](http://www.financialbasics.org.au)

In partnership with

