Ayr State School

Where The River Provides

Where the River Provides was inspired by stories shared by Ian Zaro with the Birburu Years 5–6 students at Ayr State School about growing up on Country around the Burdekin River.

Ian spoke about learning important life skills and knowledge from his grandfather and father. They would walk to the riverbanks to fish, set crab pots, spear fish and use nets, while gathering food such as mushrooms, wild berries, yams and taro. The river provided an abundance of food, including prawns, mullet, whiting, bream and barramundi. Ian also recalled catching an eight-foot shovelnose shark and how fishing practices and safety have changed over time due to increasing crocodile numbers.

The students connected strongly with Ian's stories, recognising many of the food sources he described from their own experiences fishing and gathering with family along the banks of the Burdekin River. These shared experiences inspired them to celebrate the river as a source of food, knowledge, family and connection to Country.

The students painted upcycled clothing to represent the food sources provided by the river. The artwork incorporates an upcycled formal gown and men's ties painted with fish, stingray, hammerhead shark and turtles. Watercolour paper and paint were decoupaged onto the garment, while scrap fabric was repurposed for the headpiece.

Through this wearable artwork, the students honour Ian's stories and their own experiences, while celebrating the richness of the Burdekin River and the importance of caring for Country.

Where The River Provides 2026

Upcycled clothing - men's ties and formal gown, acrylic paint, watercolour paper, air dry clay and scrap fabric