



PRACTITIONER PRESENTATION

The evolution of the Children's Gnangara Groundwater Festival – Whiteman Park's flagship environmental education event

Sarah Stevenson, Whiteman Park

Abstract

How do we teach the community to care for a hidden resource on which our ecosystem depends? How do we interest the next generation in protecting something they cannot see? Whiteman Park, a conservation and recreation reserve in Perth's north-east, exists, in part, to protect the land and catchments above the unconfined Gnangara Water Mound aquifer.

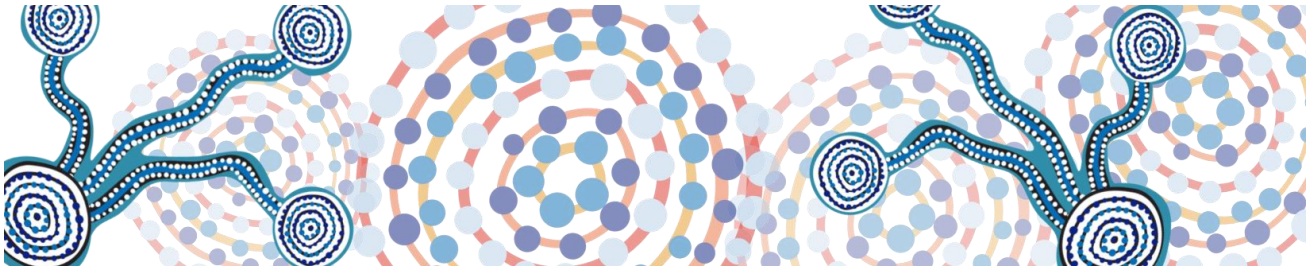
In 2002, Whiteman Park brought its own unique adaption of an American model of the Children's Groundwater Festival to Western Australian students. Whiteman Park offers a unique venue for the festival because it relies 100% on groundwater for its own water

supplies and acts to protect the southern tip of the Gnangara Water Mound, as well as the unique Swan Coastal Plain habitats that rely on it.

This talk will explore the development of this remarkably engaging learning festival over the past fourteen years and look at the creation of one of the activities that are presented to primary school students at the annual event.

We are teaching children who are old enough to understand groundwater and related environmental concepts while they are still young enough to form their own value systems – and most importantly, change both their own and their family's behaviours.

We will illustrate how the children learn through play-based activities, how they self-discover the affects our life choices have on the environment and groundwater in particular, and demonstrate the messages that can be applied by children in their own lives – choices they and their families can make to make a difference.

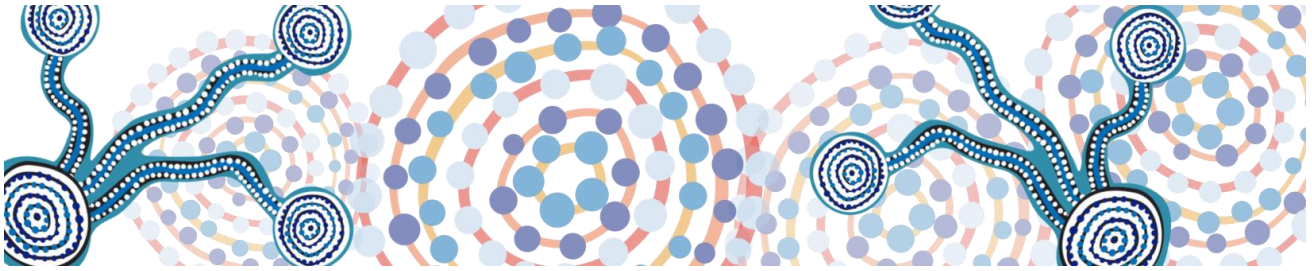


Acknowledgement

Sarah Stevenson and Sinead Wilson acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet and pays respects to their Elders past and present.

Acknowledgement also to The Children's Groundwater Foundation.





Speaker Profile

Sarah Stevenson

Sarah Stevenson is the Marketing and Events Officer at Whiteman Park, a unique recreation and conservation reserve in Perth's northern suburbs.

In her time at the Park she has developed a passion for promoting the importance of Australia's own unique flora and fauna through engaging communications and programs.

Having worked at Whiteman Park since 2006, Sarah has overseen the evolution of the Children's Gnangara Groundwater Festival over the past fourteen years.

She is enthusiastic about building links with other environmental organizations, is the workplace sustainability champion and has been instrumental in creating engagement within the Children's Forest at Whiteman Park.

Sinead Wilson

Sinead Wilson has worked in heritage and environmental education since 1995.

Originally from Ireland, she moved to Western Australia in 2012 and has worked as an Education Officer at Whiteman Park since 2018. She also works part-time for the Western Australia Museum. Previously, she has worked in Germany, the UK and Ireland.

She is passionate about developing hands-on, minds-on opportunities for learning and integrating maths, art and literacy teaching into environmental and heritage spaces. She is particularly interested in connecting with excluded communities and special needs groups.

She is married with two children.

Website links

→ [linked.com/in/sarah-stevenson-55772767](https://www.linkedin.com/in/sarah-stevenson-55772767)

