

# *B1 Reflections, June 2017*



VB: At the conclusion of our trip to Murgon, we were asked by Mr Walker to reflect on our experience as a whole, but to also think about three questions specifically: what had we learned about ourselves, our country and indigenous culture?

I remember looking at these questions in my book and feeling slightly disillusioned. Of course, we had learnt so much in all three of these categories. We learnt leadership skills, how to function as a group, we visited sacred indigenous sites and learnt about the history of the land we are so privileged to live on. We met so many new people and made connections and bonds to last a lifetime. We did all these things. And yet, it had never really crossed my mind that this trip was about learning about things that were foreign to us, or gaining insight into how other, “different”, people lived. It was just about... people. For me, I felt the most rewarding part of this trip was not discovering differences in lifestyles. It was finding the innate similarities. How inextricably linked we all are, and how little circumstance matters in the end - we’re all human.

While there was always the sense that the children we were connecting with at Murgon Primary were having a very different upbringing to our own, it was never central to our interactions. No matter where you are or who you are, the joy of play remains a constant. These were just kids willing to welcome us, play with us, laugh with us, and upon our departure, cry with us. For me, this trip gave me the most uplifting reminder that we are all connected, no matter what. Learning about indigenous culture and the history of our country was incredibly valuable, but the human connections we all made is what will really stay with us all.

I think what I am trying to say, really, is that this wasn’t a trip about differences or foreignness, it wasn’t about “us” and “them”. It was about closing the gap completely, not just crossing the bridge. It was about what unites us, not what divides us. Those connections we made, the “realness” of them, the sense of humanity and empowerment in forming those bonds, that is what I will never forget.

*“Remember this:  
joys are the same,  
and love is the same.  
Pain is the same and  
blood is the same.  
Smiles are the same,  
and hearts are  
just the same -  
wherever they are,  
wherever you are,  
wherever we are,  
all over the world.”*  
- Mem Fox



HC: Over the past week I have learnt so much about myself. I've realised that I come across to students and staff as a loving person, which also reflects my personality. I've learnt that teaching is something that I'm interested in and could possibly pursue once finished school. I've found myself to be very understanding, especially when the kids are telling me a story. I understand where people are coming from and can see both sides of the story before making a judgement. I've learnt that helping others is my passion and I now know that I would do anything to help the kids in any way I can. I've learnt over the week that my Country had a darker past than I had known about. I knew that the Australian Government were never nice to the Aboriginal people once settling upon Australia. However I learnt even more about how cruel the Government was to the Traditional Owners of the land. I've learnt that Australia doesn't give enough to those communities, such as Murgon, who need the facilities that some of the more popular areas do, e.g. the Gold Coast. Over the week I've learnt about how connected the Aboriginal people were to their land. Their spiritual beliefs are quite amazing and even though it may not be as common today, it still exists in today's society and is still being taught to younger generations. I've learnt that even in a society that is dominated by white people, the Aboriginal culture and beliefs are still there, and are still being lived. I've learnt so many new things while on this trip and I can now say that I have grown as a person as a result of it.

JJ: I have really enjoyed my experience at Murgon. I have gained more knowledge about my country, the aboriginal culture and myself. I have learnt that you don't have to travel too far from our own backyard to find a completely new environment filled with unique and special experiences. I have learnt how proud the aboriginal community are of their culture and how rare and honourable it is to witness an aboriginal dance first hand. I have learnt that I have the ability to bring true happiness to peoples' lives and have made everlasting memories.

AG: Well honestly going into this trip I thought it would be a good trip, nice experience and stuff, but I completely underestimated how incredible this trip would be and how much I would learn, not only about myself, but also my country and the culture.

Going into this trip I didn't really fancy myself as an amazing communicator or a prospective teacher and I hadn't really talked to many young kids once I'd passed their age. I remember thinking just on the walk from the bus to the school that I'd just be in a pretty awkward situation for 5 days and I wouldn't get along too well with any of the children.

It turns out that I even underestimated myself a bit because, even though it may have taken a good part of the first day, I was actually pretty good around my class and, honestly, even though it might sound a bit corny, it felt really good whenever I was able to help someone understand things a bit clearer. It was in the company of my temporary classmates that I was able to bring out one of my more hidden attributes, namely my competitiveness which came out a lot on Rewards Day (there was a jumping castle, there may have been some wrestling... Nothing more will be said).

Originally I joined the trip because I thought it would be a valuable insight into what Australia is past my backyard, and damn, I certainly got a bit of that. One of the most eye-opening things about this trip was actually how close everything was to home. Murgon is only 223km away from Brisbane but in reality, nothing I've seen first-hand could've been further away from our living. Ok, maybe that makes it sound worse than it because I haven't really seen much, but still, some of kids were literally some of the nicest people I've met and what made it even more special is that they were able to be so positive even though their conditions (be it living conditions, family relations or physical/mental struggles) were so serious.

I feel that through the visiting of multiple culturally significant places, like the Ration Shed and the Welcoming Ceremony, I've gained a further understanding of the culture of the Wakka Wakka people and the struggle that they've had to endure in order to keep their culture alive to this day. I also learnt of what can only be described as a race crime committed against their people and their legal retaliation against these crimes, as well as their significant sporting history.

Honestly though, it doesn't matter if I had 1000 words and a month to write this, I don't think that I'd ever be able to actually describe the impact that this trip had on me, and I believe that this fact is incredibly telling about the quality of the trip and the experience.

AP: I really enjoyed being with the children at Murgon State School in Wakka Wakka country. I was sceptical at first but when I listened to the students and they followed my advice with their work, they always got the right answers; I felt good about myself and I could see it made them feel the same. To be honest, the past week away has been an experience very, very different to anything I have done before. I thought it might just be a good distraction from the holidays, but after the first two days I found that it had become much more than that. I had made friends that I may have not made otherwise in any other environment and I probably will never forget the friends that I had made either. It has been a powerful and eye-opening experience. I learnt so much about this country, many of which even most Australians might not be aware of. The suffering of indigenous people under British rule, the massive amounts of racism that had taken place and the brutal murders of Aboriginal men, women and children for no crime other than the colour of their skin in many cases is inexcusable. The sacred site we visited in respectful silence was beautiful and serene with nothing giving away the possible atrocities that had taken place there. I've learnt a lot about the land and the people on it. The life of a young indigenous child is much more harsh and unforgiving compared to ours. It saddened me to think that school attendance rates can be low because some parents do not really care too much about their children's education. I could not believe, some children came to school without having been supplied breakfast at home. The Breakfast Club at Murgon is brilliant. Some children had to walk long distances to get to school because their parents would be sleeping all morning. This is very different to what I am use to seeing and hearing. At the end of the day, we are all human and I have enjoyed giving my time to the beautiful kids at Murgon. As Uncle Eric said, we must move forwards and not backwards. This trip has made everything real for me.



LK: It's hard to write down all the new feelings and sights that I have come across throughout the trip. What I learnt about myself wasn't based on listening to anyone speak, but instead by taking some kind of action and seeing a result. Now I know that I love being in a different environment from what I am used too, that I treasure helping those who crave for attention and love, that I am warm-hearted about seeing little kids be happy and maybe being a part of the cause, and that I love building and developing relationships with people. The trip opened up my eyes that life isn't fair for anyone, but some get it harder than others. And I am not saying that our lives aren't hard or that we don't have our problems, but rather I am implying that some kids (just like any of us once were) are struggling to receive the things that came so easily to us, such as education, food and love. The trip opened up my view about not only myself, but about Australia and how close-minded some of us are. Murgon State School, is really only in our backyard, but the difference in people, and the atmosphere can be seen. Throughout the 6 days, we Somerset students were not only fortunate to develop new friendships with the students at Murgon State School, but we also shared unforgettable moments within ourselves. I couldn't be more grateful for the amazing bunch of people that I got to spend time with.

With every day, we discovered more about ourselves, our country and Aboriginal culture. It never really came across my mind how connected indigenous Australians are to their land, to their god, to their families, even the moon and the stars are a part of their lives. It makes me happy knowing that even after all these years, they are still able to pass down their knowledge and share it with the rest of us. What amazed me from the trip, was when one of the Aboriginal Elders that spoke to us said that they aren't holding a grudge against white people, and that they aren't trying to make anyone feel bad about what has happened to them in the past, but instead, they are just trying to make everybody aware of the past, so we can all appreciate the present and not worry about the future.

Humble, caring and appreciative. These are the three words that describe what I have learnt to be. It is hard for me to now live on the Gold Coast and not think about Murgon, and the people in it. Although our time there wasn't long, it was enough to be a part of something bigger. To gain knowledge and leave an impact.

ZL: From the trip, I have learned that if I treat everyone genuinely, I will receive the same wholehearted embrace and form some of the most beautiful connections. Staying with the students from Murgon State School for just five short days I became a much more confident person because I know that confidence comes from experience; the more I give out and not keeping anything to myself the more happiness I will receive. Australia is a big country and we come from different places leading very different lives. Seeing and listening to some of the stories from the students I became really concerned about some of the students as many of them have to walk over 30 minutes home and they are only in Prep and some only wears T-shirts and shorts when it is just 2 degrees outside. Meanwhile, I realised that all the things in life that I have taken for granted and seen as 'normal' greatly differs from the 'normal' the kids living here consider it as being. Seeing the big smiles on kids' faces when receiving stickers for doing the right thing is heartwarming. One of my students got a calculator from his brother and he was so intrigued by this piece of equipment that he kept playing with it all day. These kids taught me that to stay happy in life you need to start appreciating the little smaller things in life. I learned that although our lives maybe vastly different, but at the end we are all human who love and care for each other. Before the trip I never really looked into aboriginal culture, but after being on B1, I experienced aboriginal dance, stories, music and art. I fell in love with this historical culture.

GL: During my stay at Barambah I learnt and experienced a lot of new things. I learnt a lot about myself and especially how important the small things are, like simply helping a kid tie their shoelace or taking their hand. These small things can have such happy impacts on a little person's life and has also impacted me. This has showed me how much love and compassion I can feel for someone. I have created such big bonds with several of the kids and in the end found it very difficult to say goodbye. The trip also broadened my knowledge on the country I call home. I have learnt many things about our history and about the indigenous way of life. The trip showed me how beautiful the aboriginal culture is, and it has made me very sad and disappointed how in the past Europeans tried to destroy such an astonishing culture. Coming home from the trip and reflecting on everything I have learnt and experienced, I feel very lucky to live where I do and want to continue to help and have positive impacts on people's lives.



CS: Throughout the trip I learnt that I am very passionate about teaching especially younger children. I learnt that I am really open-minded to new cultures and I hope to further my knowledge with a range of new cultures and experiences. Whilst working with others I learnt that I can work within groups of people my own age and younger year groups. I have also learnt to become more sociable by putting myself in, personally, an uncomfortable situation of meeting new people, who normally I probably would not interact with.

Over the trip I have found that as a country, we live in ignorance to the culture and community of the Indigenous nation. I've come to realise this because as a society we don't appreciate or give enough recognition to the aboriginals. They have little access to education and healthcare compared to the large percentage of non-indigenous who are all educated and have easy access to healthcare. Australians also put the Indigenous community on a pedestal that they are the downfall of society but instead of aiding them we don't help them to get better.

The beauty and great significance of the indigenous culture is amazing. They have strong beliefs and as a whole community they respect one another. The culture runs really strong through the community that throughout the past of the English tearing communities apart the indigenous stuck together through the use of their culture. With the knowledge I have gained from this experience, I will be more open-minded to those apart of the Indigenous community and try to help all of the children, I worked with and came to love, in any way possible. I'd also like to share my experience with others to help 'send the message' about those who don't live the same privileged life we all live.



MR: The B1 Trip made me understand that we have it 'very good' compared to some of those families living in the area of Barambah. I now understand that we are so similar but so drastically different. Even though we are so close there is such disconnect between aboriginal and non-indigenous culture which saddens me. My connections with the kids of Murgon State School has changed the way I see things in life and has inspired me to be the kindest person I can because some are going through their own hardships that I have no idea about and you wouldn't even know about it. I love to help people and make their day better in anyway as I get a real buzz out of making other people happy. I am now interested in pursuing a career involving making the lives of others better in any way possible. Thank you Mr and Mrs Walker and Ms Smith for making this trip a possibility. I am serious about returning to Murgon in the future.

CA: Over the course of six days I have learnt many things about myself. I have learnt it is the little things – that's what makes the biggest difference. The little things such as reading a book with the lovely children of Murgon, having a running race or simply inviting other kids to sit with you, can mean a big thing in child's eyes. I have learnt the way you can make the biggest impact is just to be yourself which is being courageous, grateful, compassionate and being your younger self. These traits are the key to happiness as being a child is all about being happy no matter what the circumstances are in the world around you. I have completed this trip learning so much from the children who taught me so much about being courageous, strong and joyful. Aboriginal culture is an important thread in Australia's history that should not be forgotten. The indigenous people have a beautiful culture, traditions and history which many people do not know. This has taught me that we should be more respectful of what came before us and be more curious about the stories that people do not know about. The Aboriginal people have fought to get what is theirs and still have a long way to reach equality in Australia. The fact that it was everyone's first time to Barambah shows that we do not spend enough time travelling and exploring what and who is in our backyard. I have learnt that the Australian culture is just multiple cultures in one big melting pot being stirred constantly with a new spice being added every once and while. This trip has taught me that you do not have to go far to experience a culture which is the same yet different to what you see every day.



EF: During the week I have learnt that I enjoy being around and connecting with kids. I had an amazing couple of days making connections with many kids that I will never forget. I also learnt that going down the track of becoming a teacher could also be a possible option as enjoyed working with the kids so much. I learnt even though we are fortunate enough to live in such an amazing part of Australia, you only need to travel a couple of hours and see how different these kids lives are compared to ours. These kids although some have so little, have such innocent souls and are so welcoming and nice. I learnt that in our current day and age, still a lot of indigenous people are poorly treated by the community and are disadvantaged when it comes to accessing employment, health and education. Visiting The Ration Shed and learning more about the history was very eye opening to see how much they were discriminated against because of who they are. I also learnt that they all have a very close and special family connection. I will use the new knowledge I have acquired to help educate people about the issues that these smaller and more rural communities face.

EBW: The B Trip has opened my eyes, and allowed me to learn more about myself, my country, and aboriginal culture through immersive experiences. I've learned that there is so much happening in our country we do not hear about. There is so much that needs to be done when it comes to closing the gap in education and employment within aboriginal communities, and I think when people learn this, they become overwhelmed, and decide it would be easier not to think about. However, people like Mr Bishop, the Principal at Murgon State School, bring so much hope, and deserve more support than we can give them. I've learned that it's possible to cry when leaving people you've known for less than a week. The time I had in Murgon was truly unforgettable, and I miss the kids I met there with all my heart.

MS: I have learnt that I enjoy spending time with kids, and have more patience than I originally thought. As well as this, I was surprised at the strength of the relationships I made with the kids and my peers over a short time, and was extremely sad to leave. After the B trip, I noticed a change in my thinking, in that I had been trying to stop judging people on their appearance and behaviours.

I have learned that Australia promotes indigenous culture for tourism while in reality there is still a long way to go to reconcile with the indigenous peoples. I also learnt that Australia is home to some of the most beautiful and historical places, like Coomba Falls and the Glasshouse Mountains, not to mention the amazing sunsets. I was surprised to learn about all the different Aboriginal tribes, and how they communicated with each other. The people have a strong sense of family and carry on their traditions, like the welcome dance the kids did for us at the beginning of our trip. This experience has made me realise that I might consider teaching at schools like this in future, as I really enjoyed helping the kids and bonding with them. I can use my new knowledge to ensure that I am always respectful of the culture.

TM: Being a part of the B1 Trip was truly an amazing experience. It is a trip that I am likely to never forget, from spending time with the young children, bonding with the group of peers on the trip or gaining a larger understanding of the country we live in, this trip was more than meaningful. What truly stood out to not only me but many people on the trip, was how different just about everything was. The culture, the people and the lifestyle. It was almost a different planet and it was just a few hours down the road. What I mean by this is that this trip was an excellent example and insight into Australian and Indigenous Culture.

Overall though, I would have to say that the most impactful aspect of this trip was the children I spent time with. Before this trip I honestly did not think that I was good around children, that they did not like me and we simply did not get along. I was clearly and abundantly proven wrong on this trip. The time that I spent with those wonderful children was unforgettable. Despite the drastically different lifestyle and upbringing of these children they were just as kind, polite and friendly as any child you would find here on the Gold Coast.

To summarise, there was more than a few things that I learnt on this trip about myself, my country and its culture (more than I can list here to say the least). I feel as though what I have learnt will aid me in having a more well-rounded understanding of Australia as a Nation and its people as a united community. I may not always remember what happened on B1 but I will never forget what I have taken from it.

BH: On B1 I learnt about the ways in which I communicate with people who have a variety of personalities. I believe that I was quite a reflective person as the change in my thoughts of Australia as a country widened. The common stereotype of Australia being a rich country with little problems slowly left my beliefs as the experiences I gained progressed throughout the trip. B1 meant a lot to me and it will never be forgotten as most of the other B trippers would agree. The staff and students were all amazing and the program was extremely magnificent in the fact that not only did we help the teacher, we learnt about culture, heritage, and aboriginal struggles. Even though we drove the small 4 hours away, it almost felt like an entirely different country. With this newly found knowledge from the trip, I will involve myself in more community based activities even through retirement and will consider some form of occupation including communication with people whether it is teaching, doctor etc. My consideration in ways in which we can help Australia become a better place has opened and provided me with thoughts in how I can make a difference. We, as the first B1 trip students, are so grateful for the opportunity we have been given and thank the teachers for the support in generating and running the trip.



DT: During this trip I learnt I could make special and deep bonds with people quickly. I also learnt that I am a caring and compassionate person. I learnt that there is a great divide between the rich and poor classes in Australia that is going unnoticed by the Australian community. I learnt that there is a deep connection with the land for indigenous people and they care immensely about their history. Overall the B1 trip was the most amazing experience of my life and I wish I could go back tomorrow.

KC: B1 taught me that I can build strong relationships with people in a short period of time. I have never really felt that people would chose to spend time with, however this trop has given me confidence that I matter to other people and that the things I do can have a major impact on someone else's life. I have also learnt that the smallest things I could do have leave an enormous impact on others and that it is important to make sure those impacts are positive. I also learnt that I am quite a reserved person, I don't tend to step out of my comfort zone too much. This week has certainly helped me to step out of those boundaries and make some everlasting memories.

On this trip, I feel as if I have learnt so much about the country I call home. I learnt about its true history and how many generations before me have been told different. Some things I found a little confronting; the Coomba Falls tragedy. I also found some things heart-warming; people who have tried to embrace the culture and history of the country. I also learnt a lot about the truth behind indigenous history and culture.

During the trip, I learnt a lot about the significance of indigenous culture in mainstream society. I also learnt a lot about the history of their culture and how they have been suppressed and hidden away from the history books and society. I learnt a lot about terrible incidents that occurred when the Europeans settled in Australia. I also learnt a lot about how indigenous people fit in society and sadly, how they are recognized as inferior. This brings a tear to my eye.

MS: I learnt that it's the little things that count. Things like smiles and games are the real beginning for all happiness in life. I learnt that our country has a lot to improve upon. Letting people who have lived on this land for thousands of years become so deeply engorged in poverty and desperation is something that simply should not happen. More quality education needs to be given to the indigenous people of Australia so that their situation can improve in areas like Cherbourg.

