



Gleneagles Secondary College

*WIN Foundation & PFA  
UN International Women's Day  
8<sup>th</sup> March 2016  
Gleneagles Secondary College*



Rather than the usual celebrations for this day, WIN Foundation decided to help reach out to parents of Gleneagles Secondary School this year for International Women's Day celebration. There is a radical need for Australian schools to make changes not only in the pedagogy to cater for a growing multicultural/multiracial mix of their students but also new ways to reach out to parents, especially mothers, to give the best benefit to students.



The event started at Noon with a lunch. Seven staff, fifty-one parents and grandparents and thirteen WIN Foundation members were present.

Kathy Toth, Assistant Principal introduced the event and welcomed everyone to the school requesting all firstly to help themselves to lunch which was catered for by WIN Foundation.

Jamel Kaur Dhillon, Coordinator of Parents and Friends Association of Gleneagles and Project Manager for WIN Foundation set the scene with an introduction of International Women's Day and the necessity for cultural education and the growing diverse mix of students at Gleneagles.

Rachel Shields – song women from the Gamilaroy Country of NSW, performed an 'acknowledgment to country' ceremony paying respects to the elders of the Wurudjeri community of the region, past and present. Rachel talked about respect for the environment and Australians to become more conscious of the fragility of our environment and learning to live side by side firstly with fellow human beings of all backgrounds and then with all other living things including nature.



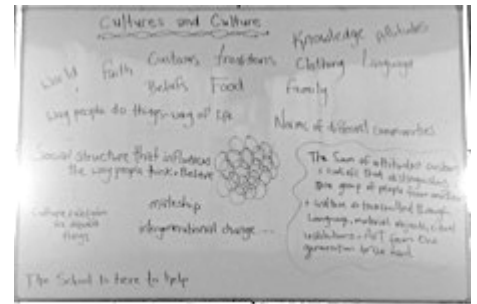
Jamel then introduced Naila, a multicultural officer of Gleneagles. There are students that not only struggle with English as their second or third language, but there are students that have not studied for a year, sometimes more, in their journey to Australia. English, cultural displacement, religious differences and misunderstandings all contribute to the issues. This means parents need to be proactive to help smooth the passage of their children through school. Strong family values and family support help promote a more positive environment for students.

Jessie Kaur Singh, founder and president of WIN then addressed the gathering. After acknowledging the role of women in education and International Womens Day spoke of the maxim of Unity in

Diversity and the gradual shift in pedagogy from a strictly 'western' outlook into one which takes into consideration the diversity of cultures now prevalent at Gleneagles.

The question 'What is culture?' was thrown open to the gathering and numerous parents, staff members and WIN Foundation members gave their views:

World Culture, Traditions, Way of life. The way people do things. Knowledge. Clothing. Respect levels within Family. Norms of different communities. Sum of attitudes and beliefs which distinguish one group of people from another. Arts. Dance. Food. Culture does not divide. Religion and colour does. Leaders pushing their 'agendas' which could be religious, divide.



Issues faced by parents and teachers were aired. There was general consensus that parents need a close liaison with the teachers and school. Parents to spend valuable time with their children and keep track of their progress in class and in school.

Dya Singh, spokesman for the Sikh community and activist spoke of the importance of a pro-active environment towards multiculturalism but remembering that we are here to add positively towards a changing Australian culture keeping that which is good in Australian culture especially the virtue of 'mateship' and 'she'll be right mate' and ensuring that each cultural or religious group does not regress into a ghetto mentality. The ideal was for each cultural/religious group to be able to retain their individual identities but positively contributing towards a pluralistic, accepting society, respecting and championing the rights of all.

Various parents, teachers and WIN members voiced their opinions on a progressive, positive and vibrant environment for the younger generations coming through.

WIN Elder Junitta Vallak concluded by paying the respects of Win Foundation towards all daughters, all sisters, all mothers, all grandmothers and all women in general to celebrate International Day for Women.

Rachel Shields went on to acknowledge all the men, fathers, grandfathers, husbands, brothers and sons that stand beside their womenfolk. She then presented an Aboriginal song from her 'country' to close proceedings. (We sing and dance together. If we do not, things will fall apart.)

