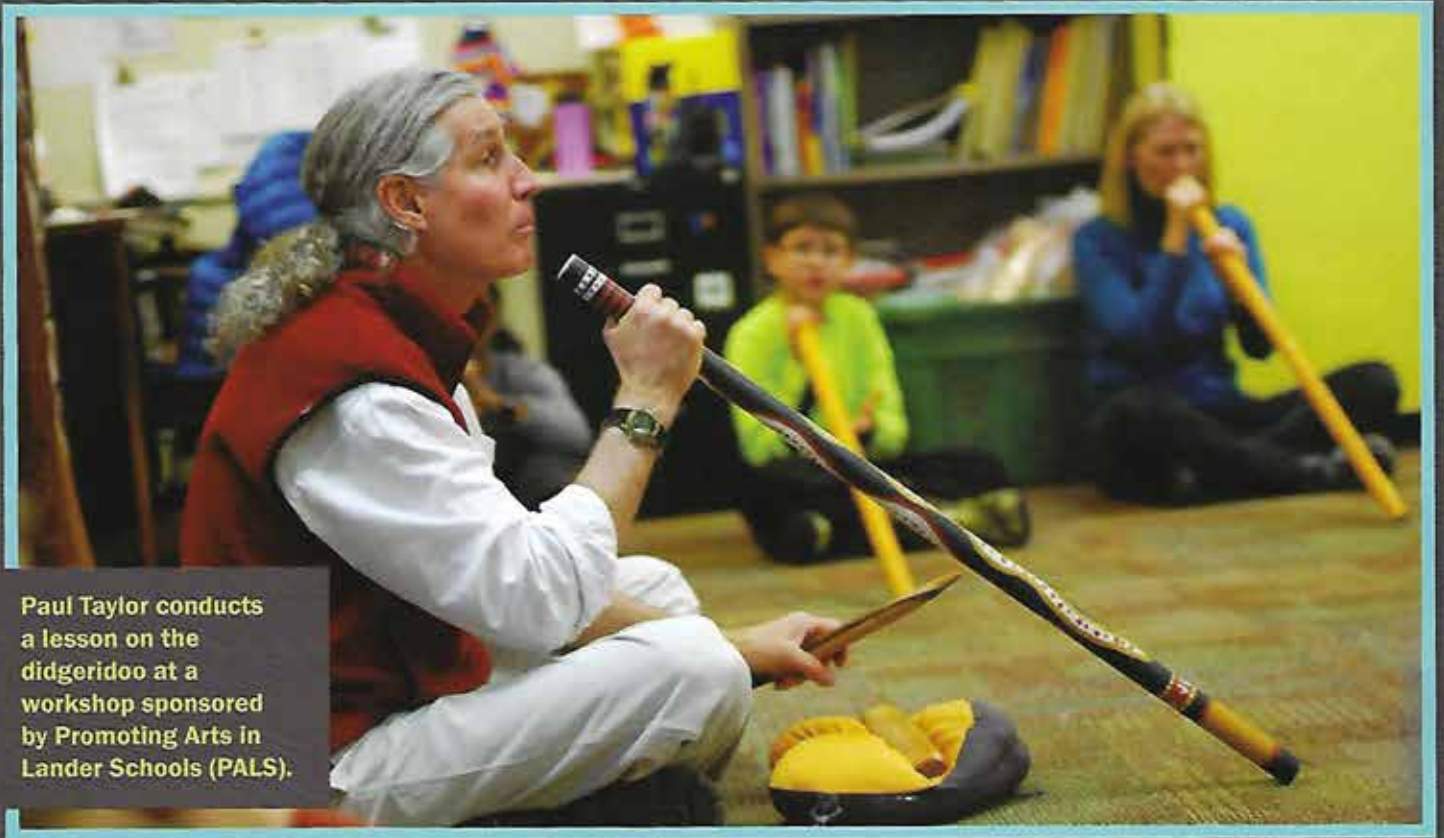


PAUL TAYLOR



Paul Taylor conducts a lesson on the didgeridoo at a workshop sponsored by Promoting Arts in Lander Schools (PALS).

Twenty-one years ago, Paul “Walking Stick” Taylor strode out of the Australian Outback into Wyoming. He took a look around, saw a familiar landscape, and, as the song says, knew that Wyoming would be his new home.

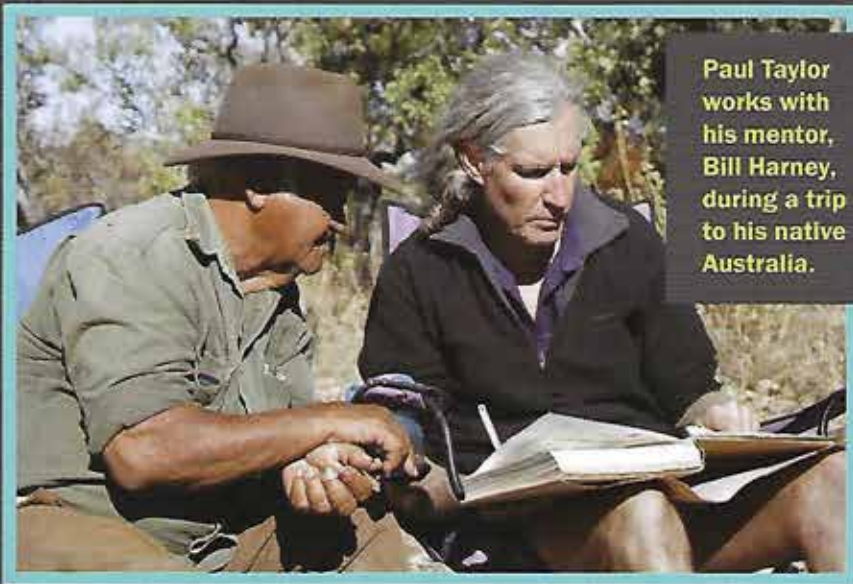
Taylor, a Wyoming Arts Council roster artist, estimates that he has performed for 140,000 people in the state in the course of 2,000 performances. He’s led 38 mural projects. He enlists the help of K-12 students, using vivid colors applied in the traditional

Aboriginal dot painting and x-ray style.

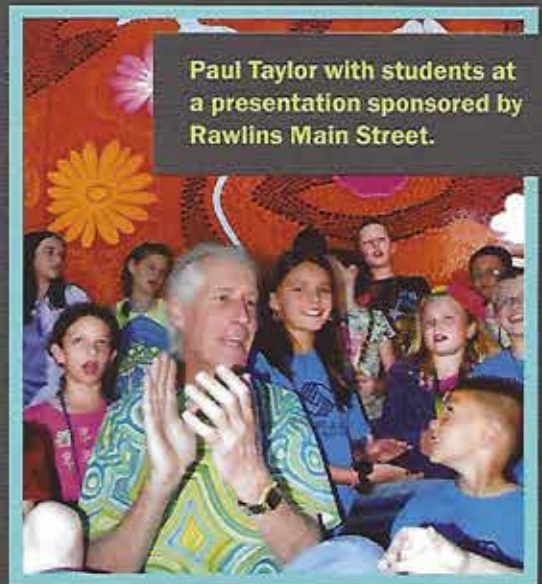
Taylor, who presents more than 200 events a year, also travels widely around the U.S. A fixture on the Wyoming artist roster since 1995, Taylor also has been on rosters in Texas, South Dakota, North Dakota, Utah, New York, South Carolina and North Carolina.

ONE NINE-YEAR-OLD GIRL SUCCINCTLY DESCRIBED A TAYLOR RESIDENCY AS “BETTER THAN A WARM COOKIE.”

“We sing, dance, paint and tell stories while learning about my homeland of Australia,” Taylor said. “The results have been



Paul Taylor works with his mentor, Bill Harney, during a trip to his native Australia.



Paul Taylor with students at a presentation sponsored by Rawlins Main Street.

powerful for me personally and for the students – kids and adults alike. I’m amazed at the energy, joy and sense of community that emerges from a residency.”

Here’s a quote from one teacher who sent in a recommendation letter for Taylor’s GAA nomination: “He made a dynamic impact on not only our students, but our staff as well,” said Angie Hayes at Willard Elementary School in Casper. “We saw our student body come together as a community to celebrate learning. It was an experience that we will not soon forget.”

One nine-year-old girl succinctly described a Taylor residency as “better than a warm cookie.”

Taylor annually returns to his native land to work with his mentor Bill Harney in his Wardaman homeland in Australia. Harney is an elder and the last senior male Aboriginal custodian of the Wardaman people of the Victoria, Flora and Katherine River Districts in the Northern Territory. Harney has worked in both indigenous and non-indigenous worlds. He and Taylor talked to many classes during the elder’s visit to UW in September of 2008.

As for Taylor – “I’m still learning,” he said. The Laramie resident spends time with Harney to

learn more about the Aboriginal culture, which has attracted to as a young man in Adelaide. He was befriended by a group of Wardaman people who taught him to play the didgeridoo.

“I owe them a lot,” Taylor said.

The didgeridoo is a key element of his performances and workshops. He’s taught thousands of schoolkids to make didgeridoos out of PVC pipe. He also teaches them how to make whackadoos, noisemakers made from a long stick and found objects such as bottle caps. Along the way, he tells stories from Australia’s colorful history.

Taylor’s life story is almost as colorful. During his school years in Adelaide, he cared for four of his eight siblings while trying to keep up with his schoolwork which did not include any art classes. After graduation, he traveled to London to study acting. He worked as an actor and stage manager and – eventually – a clown. He then brought his new performing skills back to Australia, where he also spent some time as a social worker. He was chosen to accompany U.S. performer Bobby Bridger on an arts tour of Australia. Along the way,

continued on page 16

continued from page 9

Bridger, descendent of famous mountain man Jim Bridger, invited Taylor to Wyoming. He worked as an actor and stage manager for Bridger's "Ballad of the West" at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West in Cody from 1992-94.

Taylor has recorded numerous CDs, including 2003's "Cooee: Songs and Stories from Down Under," with Don Spencer. It won seven awards in the U.S., including the Parent's Choice Gold Award for Storytelling and the Children's Music Web Award.

In 2013, Taylor served as a guest lecturer in the University of Wyoming Honors Program. Over the years, he's taught and advised classes in anthropology, global and area studies, theater and dance, music, and religious studies.

According to musician and UW professor emeritus of music Rodney Garnett: "Paul Taylor is able to bridge the sometimes artificial boundaries between disciplines and ways of thinking, to bring

people together to learn from his vast knowledge of Australian lifeways and Aboriginal art and culture."

In 2014, Taylor was a Northern Territory state finalist for the "Australian of the Year" awards. Ironic when you consider that Taylor is now a U.S. citizen.

Since 2003, Taylor has served as the director of the Yabulyawan Dreaming Project (YDP), dedicated to documenting Aboriginal culture and the wisdom of Yidumduma.

He conducts tours of Australian cultural areas for Wyoming educators. John Gores and his wife have been on two of those trips. Said Gores: "We can attest to the respect he has earned from Aboriginal people for his efforts to preserve and educate others about their fast-disappearing culture."

In many creative ways, Taylor has been able to shrink the distance between Australia's Outback and Wyoming's out-of-the-way places.

Paul Taylor works with Thermopolis Middle School students on the rainbow snake mural, a project sponsored by the Hot Springs Greater Learning Foundation.

