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APRIL 2011

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# US classes that

A former Adelaide social worker is teaching Australian culture to American schoolchildren, writes Jill Pengelley.



**B**Y jingo, the Yanks love Paul Taylor. You wouldn't back him to wrestle a croc, but he's otherwise fair dinkum.

One gig at a time, the former Adelaide social worker is travelling the US and spreading Aussie culture.

A lot of his work is in primary schools, where he teaches children Aboriginal art and music, the basics of cricket and how to speak Australian.

By the time he has completed a week-long residency, they're batting and bowling, hollering "cooe" and singing *Tie Me Kangaroo Down*.

"It's because of this incredible interest in Australia," he says from his home in Laramie, Wyoming.

"They don't know much but there is a fascination with the whole place."

Now 53, Mr Taylor grew up in Adelaide and went to a Catholic school in the western suburbs.

He studied social work at the SA Institute of Technology (now UniSA), then went bush to work with Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

"It was a very radical time at the institute," he recalls.

"A lot of people wanted to change the world.

"I said to myself that I would not follow a career path but actually have experiences and the more experiences I could have younger would set me up later in life with options."

In 1983, he changed directions and went backpacking to England, where he joined the circus.

"I got an actor's equity card and an agent and, all of a sudden, I was hanging out with Shakespearean actors," he says.

"They looked down on me because I was

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# are fair dinkum

**“I thought after the (Sydney) Olympics, Australia was not going to be the flavour of the month, but it is**

the clown from the circus and I got my card through the back door.”

He came back and worked at the Fringe Festival in Adelaide and in regional theatre throughout Australia.

In the early 1990s, he unleashed his inner clown on the US and there he has stayed, although he gets home every year for what he calls a sabbatical, to brush up on all things Australian.

He visits his Aboriginal mentor, Yidumduma Bill Harney in the NT, as well as family in Adelaide and watches Australian TV.

“I miss the sense of humour; the Americans don’t get us,” he says.

“I’d sit home with my mum and she’d put on the *Chaser* and I was belly-laughing.”

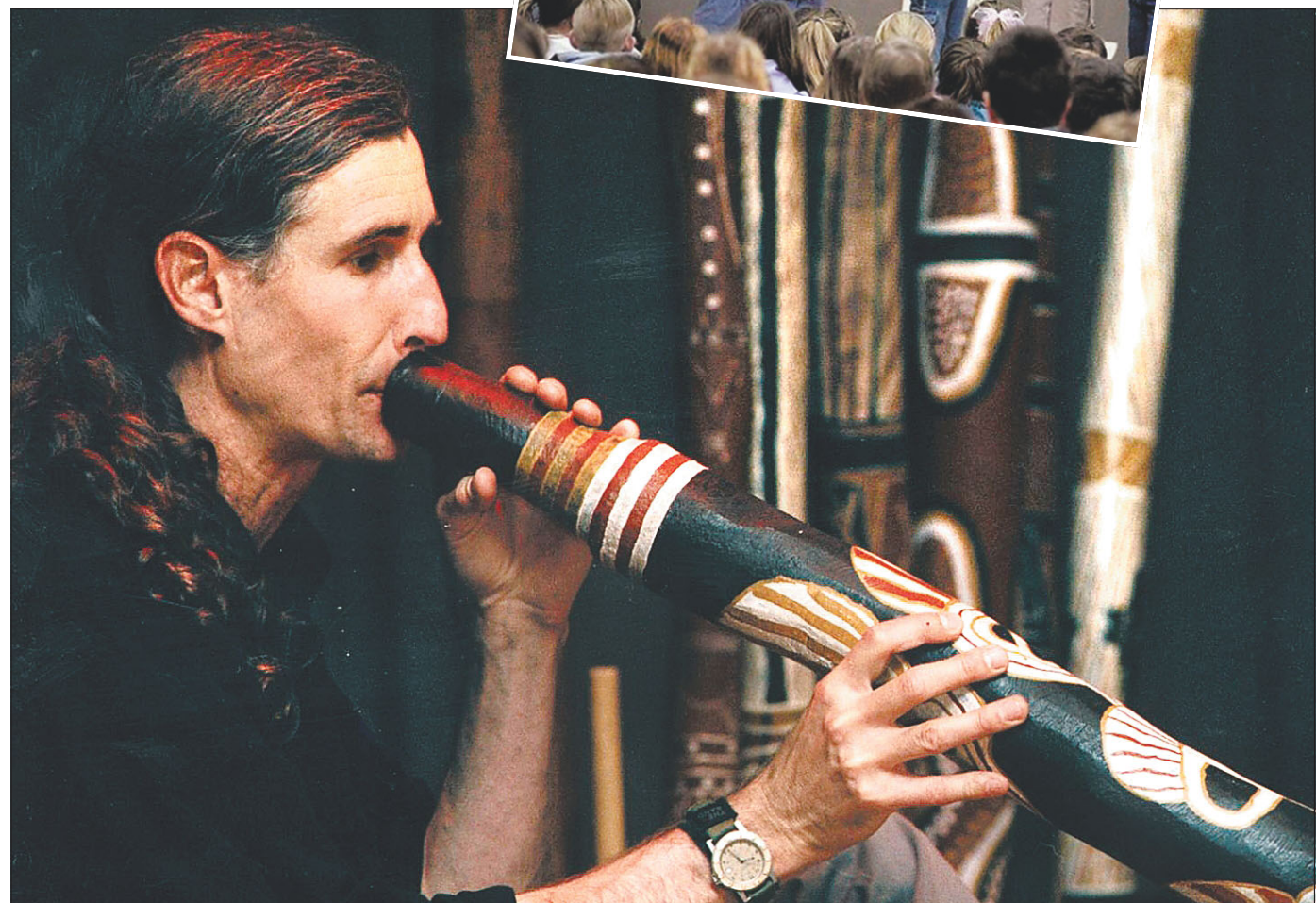
Mr Harney also makes regular visits to the US, where they present shows together. Mr Taylor has conducted school and community workshops from coast to coast and is endorsed by numerous arts councils as an outstanding artist.

He teaches about European and Aboriginal Australian history, about food, music, language, dance, sport and how to make didgeridoos out of PVC pipe.

For his work in arts in education, he has been appointed an adjunct professor at the University of Wyoming.

“I thought after the (Sydney) Olympics, Australia was not going to be the flavour of the month, but it is,” Mr Taylor says.

Paul Taylor, in his own school uniform, left, teaches about cricket, Aussie culture and how to play the didgeridoo



## Aussie lingo for Yanks

**slang:** FROM Down Under to Up Over, Paul Taylor is teaching Americans some Australian lingo.

Some of it may have fallen from use but still appears in old movies or songs.

The list includes sayings such as:

» DON’T come the raw prawn

» STRIKE me pink

» KNOCK your socks off

» ROO loose in the top paddock

Basic vocabulary also is covered, including snags, chook, lolly, postie, barbie and ute.

For more on Paul Taylor, visit [www.paultaylor.ws](http://www.paultaylor.ws) »

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