


# THE SHERIDAN Press

## TODAY'S WEATHER



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Justin Sheely | *The Sheridan Press* Australia native Paul Taylor demonstrates how to throw a paper boomerang at Arvada-Clearmont school Wednesday, May 2, 2018. Australian-American educator, artist and ambassador Paul Taylor visited Clearmont for two days last week to talk about aboriginal culture and teach students how to make a didgeridoo and boomerang.

Growing up in Australia in the 1960s, Paul Taylor didn't learn anything about aboriginal culture, nor did he receive any art or music education,



as the subjects weren't part of the required curriculum.

Despite the lack of exposure as a kid, Taylor taught all three topics to elementary students in Sheridan County School District 3 last week. Taylor, an Australian-American educator, artist and ambassador, visited Clearmont for two days to talk about Australian culture and teach students how to make items like the didgeridoo and boomerang. He talked with 47 students in grades kindergarten through six from Clearmont Elementary and the Arvada School.

Clearmont Elementary curriculum and literacy coordinator Alicia Auzqui was contacted by staff at the WYO Performing Arts and Education Center — where Taylor performed Saturday evening — to see if the school was interested in hosting Taylor. Auzqui accepted, and the theater provided materials for students to paint and draw.

On May 2, Taylor taught students how to make and play a didgeridoo and create a four-sided boomerang out of cardboard. The didgeridoo colors included black, blue, red, orange, yellow and white. Some of the students put their ranch brand on the instruments.

Later in the day, students went through the process of tracing, sketching, coloring, cutting out and folding the boomerang to make it flow through the air. When he wasn't instructing, Taylor softly sang while students worked on their boomerangs. The students then threw their boomerangs all around the gym in the Clearmont Recreation Center. At the end of the day, Taylor showed the students how to throw a three-sided boomerang.

Sixth-graders John Crump and Kamy Michelena said they learned a lot about the international culture. They learned how to use circular breathing to properly play the didgeridoo, which they said was probably their favorite part of Wednesday.

The two students were excited to have the opportunity and were impressed with Taylor's teachings and personality.

"He's pretty funny, but he also is considerate of his culture," Michelena said.

"He's eager to teach, I noticed that," Crump added.

Originally from Adelaide, South Australia, Taylor first came to the U.S. in 1990 and returned in 1992. He began living in the United States full time in 1995, traveling and performing across the country. Taylor lives in Laramie most of the year and travels across the state and country performing and visiting schools. He is also a guest lecturer at the University of Wyoming.

Taylor first encountered art and music in college, where he studied

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social work and met a few aboriginal students. After college, Taylor worked with Aborigines for a few years before moving to England. He trained as a dramatic actor in London in the 1980s and performed across Great Britain as an actor and circus clown for a few years.

Taylor didn't plan to be a teacher, but wanted his life to be a free-flowing journey.

"I just decided to have an adventure with my life and travel, and then see what would come," Taylor said. "I thought, 'I'll travel and see what happens.' I never planned to be in America."

When he arrived in the U.S., many people were interested in Australia but didn't know much about the culture.

"Generally they really didn't have any idea of Australia other than from movies," Taylor said. "There was a lot of fascination with Australia. They knew the Outback, but generally there was a lack of education about Australia."

Taylor is a dual citizen who considers himself Australian-American. He goes back to Bush University in Australia for a few months every year to do research and stay updated on the culture. He will return to Australia later this month and stay until late July.

"If I don't go back home, it would be so easy to become an American Australian," Taylor said. "It's really important that I go back and reconnect every year."

Taylor said although he hasn't been a social worker in decades, he still thinks of his job as a type of social work, broadening minds to different cultures and beliefs.

"Working through the arts — it creates a lot of joy and it creates a lot of happiness with the kids," Taylor said. "I always say, 'You don't have to believe this, but this is what aboriginal culture believes.' We can all learn from new ways of thinking."

Taylor didn't know where life would take him, but last week he ended up in Clearmont, discussing culture and history to students who live half a world away from Australia.

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By [Ryan Patterson](#) | May 7th, 2018

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Ryan Patterson joined The Sheridan Press staff as a reporter covering education, business and sports in August 2017. He's a native of Wisconsin and graduated from Marquette University with a bachelor's in journalism in May 2017. Email him at: [ryan.patterson@thesheridanpress.com](mailto:ryan.patterson@thesheridanpress.com).

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