

Remembering Uncle Colin Bourke

On behalf of the Ngarara Willim team it is with great sadness that we share the passing of Emeritus Professor Colin Bourke, MBE on the 10 February, aged 84. Colin was a life member of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium (NATSIHEC) due to the significant contributions he made to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander higher Education and to Education more broadly.

Colin's leadership and scholarship paved the way for the educational opportunities we have access to today. His advocacy and leadership as an inaugural member of the National Aboriginal Education Committee (NAEC) laid the foundations for NATSIHEC. It's his shoes and the shoes of the many other pioneers that we need to try to fill in our role as advocates for our communities.

Colin built a ladder that he left for all of us to follow and he did this with community and inside the Education system. He represented many firsts for Aboriginal people, starting his career as a primary school teacher he went on to become principal. After completing his Master's degree in Education, he was employed as the general manager of the Aboriginal Development Commission before moving into the role of Assistant Secretary for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. Later roles included Deputy Principal of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and the head of the Aboriginal Taskforce at South Australia Institute of Technology (SAIT).

In 1977 Colin became the Director of the Centre for Research into Aboriginal Affairs at Monash University. One of his referees described Colin as part of a "new group of emergent Aboriginal professional whose effect on the course of Aboriginal destiny is likely to be a significant event in Australian history".

Colin did not fail to live up to those expectations. Alongside an unwavering commitment to employing Aboriginal people or what Colin called 'Aboriginalisation'

he also continued a Black Studies program which gave voice and a platform to a number of prominent Indigenous community members. Realising limitations Colin began working closely with another titan of our space and his future wife Eleanor Bourke who was working at the University of Melbourne. Through an important collaboration they provided a platform for Indigenous speakers. For Colin and Eleanor, this work provided a crucial platform for Aboriginal perspectives and firsthand information about our communities. This challenged the stranglehold that existed to this point of non-Indigenous people writing and talking about our communities.

In 1981 Colin returned to the University of South Australia to lead the School of Aboriginal and Islander Administration and later the Faculty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. At the time of Colin's retirement from the University of South Australia in 1998 he was acting Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic). Colin was also one of the founders of the Victorian Aboriginal Educative Consultative Group (AECG) and the first Chair.

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Significant and important dates

8 March – Public Holiday

18 March – National Close the Gap Day

31 March – Census Date

Future dates

26 May – National Sorry Day

27 May – 1967 Referendum

27 May - 3 June – National Reconciliation Week

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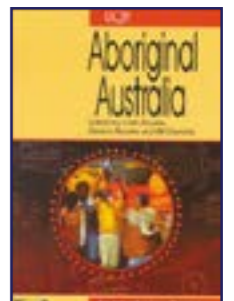
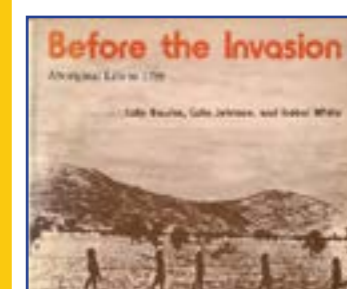
Colin was held in high esteem by all that had the privilege of engaging with him. In a recent book published by Professor Leanne Holt, Professor Bob Morgan highlights the contributions that Colin made to the NAEC and the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education agendas. Uncle Bob said “Colin was quiet, unassuming, a really deep thinker. . . he’s one of those unsung heroes and doesn’t get enough of the recognition that I believe he deserves for his role in Aboriginal education, and he’s a gun of a man” (Holt, 2021).

Even after his retirement Colin continued to contribute to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education and continued to show that that he was a ‘gun of a man’ as the Chair of the Monash University Indigenous Advisory Council.

Colin once said that there are two kinds of black fellas, there were those he said that built and climbed ladders and then left them in place for others to climb. Unfortunately, he also acknowledged that there were those that climbed the ladder and then kicked it away to stop anyone from following them up. We can all learn something profound from that simple observation. He built a ladder and he left it for

us all to climb. Our world has lost a man that gave so much of his life to achieving better educational outcomes for our people and communities. Our thoughts are with Eleanor and family at this difficult time. Eleanor who has equally contributed so much to our community and continues to do so.

We are sure our ancestors have welcomed Uncle/Professor Colin Bourke with more than open arms into the spirit world. Professor Colin Bourke never ever forgot the mob and he pursued opportunities for all of us in a humble way. We have really lost a true Elder.



We encourage you to read Uncle Colins books, titled *Before the Invasion: Aboriginal Life to 1788* and *Aboriginal Australia: An Introductory Reader in Australian Aboriginal Studies*.

Womin Djeka!

Welcome to the 9th edition

Womin Djeka (Welcome)! It’s biderap (Dry) season and female common brown butterflies are flying. Bowat (tussock-grass) is long and dry and the Southern Cross is high in the south at sunrise.

We hope you all had a safe, restful and happy holiday and have started the year off refreshed after such a challenging year.

In our first newsletter for 2021 we pay our respects to Elder Uncle Colin Bourke. We pay tribute to his life and acknowledge his achievements in Indigenous Higher Education.

The Ngarara Willim team reflect on Invasion Day and share photos taken by staff and students.

We welcome all students back and meet and welcome our new students at our Gama-dji programs. We also welcome new staff member Shannon Woodcock who will be supporting Ngarara Willim’s Academic tutoring program.

We acknowledge success and congratulate two of our students, Kiara Davis and Caley Manzey, on their recent awards and outstanding achievements in the Career Trackers program.

We congratulate Kamilaroi woman and Bachelor of Fashion (Design) student Louisa Bloomer on winning the 2021 RMIT Indigenous design competition.

We put the spotlight on current student Thomas Watson and we chat with our *Deadly Alumni*, Takyscha Brennan who tells us about her study at RMIT and what she is up to now.

We share our chat with our friend and former colleague Simon Rose and find out what he has been working on in the production and film industry through his company ‘The Great Aboriginal People’. We share some photos taken with our students and alumni across the City and Bundoora campuses recently.

The Ngarara Willim Centres are now open with minimal staffing. Our team look forward to seeing you all in the near future. Take care of yourselves and each other.

Invasion Day 2021

Another January 26 has passed...

The Ngarara Willim staff and students often attend the Invasion Day March in solidarity with our community who advocate to 'Change the Date'. This year's 26 January event still drew a huge crowd of supporters, but it was much quieter than usual, possibly due to the strange twelve months we've just experienced and peoples uncertainty about being in a large crowd. As always, it was amazing to see so many students and members of the community there, sharing an important moment in time with friends and family.

The staff at Ngarara Willim often discuss Indigenous topics in our office, whether they are contemporary issues, anniversaries of important dates, or achievements of our community. Each of us bring different perspectives and enjoy listening to and sharing thoughts with the team.

Some examples of the 26 January event include:

- Wanting to celebrate Australia, but finding the current date entirely inappropriate.
- The importance of acknowledging the impact on the Eora people in particular.
- Reflecting and mourning the beginning of the immense loss of culture and knowledge, while still celebrating our existence and pride for our people and community.
- Dealing with internal conflict of pride, exclusion, sadness and festivity through our own personal cultural lens.
- Missing your family, remembering your people and land, and feeling a deep need to connect with culture.

Once a year on January 26, we all get to feel a bit strange together while we gather our thoughts, share and reflect. One thing we all know is that the strength of our community is ever-lasting!

Always was, Always will be!

Photography and Photographs provided by: Darcy McConnell, Jasper Riley, Winyinnar Mendez Williams & Cathy Doe.



Student Success @ CareerTrackers

Career Trackers held its Annual Gala event online this month starting the night with a premiere viewing of a documentary titled 'In Their Tracks', that follows the lives of four alumni of the program. The evening concluded with an awards ceremony acknowledging the achievements of their interns, alumni and partners.

Kiara Davis

Kiara is a Bachelor of Health Science/ Bachelor of Applied Science (Chiro) student at RMIT and was a recipient of one of the top 8 Academic achievement awards at the Gala event.



Kiara was awarded for her participation in her third year Summer Internship and presentation with the Health Strong team at Medibank. Kiara said, 'this internship was the most meaningful internship'. During her time, Kiara helped to send out a graduate newsletter, created a welcome pack for Medibank graduates and travelled to Sydney to help set up Medibank's Wellness Centre.

Ngarara Willim would like to congratulate all of the students, alumni and partners who were recipients of outstanding achievements and awards on the night, including two of Ngarara Willim's students, Kiara Davis and Caley Manzie.

Caley Manzie

Caley Manzie won the Community Spirit Award at the Gala event. The Award is presented to an intern who demonstrates an outstanding commitment to their community.



Caley is a role model for future generations and is an active and positive influence within the CareerTrackers, Ngarara Willim and RMIT community.

Caley has been mentoring Indigenous secondary students in STEM and shares and celebrates her culture with her local hockey club and team at Jacobs Group. Caley's ethos is built on knowledge and resource sharing so her community can experience greater health, education and cultural outcomes.

Students back on Campus

Ngarara Willim staff, students and alumni spent the day at our Bundoora campus recently working with RMIT Sport on filming of an upcoming podcast on Indigenous Pride, Participation & Recognition in Sport.

We also spent a day with students and staff on the city campus engaging in a student photo shoot. The Ngarara Willim Centre has opened its doors again for students and community in a COVID Safe environment.



Gama-dji: An online experience

In February Ngarara Willim hosted our commencing VE and HE students in another online Gama-dji Orientation Program. We had hoped that 2021 would mean a swift return to campus but unfortunately this was unable to happen with another outbreak dampening any ideas.



Students were welcomed and asked to join staff for a bite to eat and to engage in some social conversations with staff, student leaders and one another. It was great to hear about what students were going to be studying and why.

The main presentation then started with introductions from staff who represent the services and supports utilised by students. One of the important aspects of the Gama-dji Program is the fact that the staff who come and introduce themselves and their services are the staff who students will liaise with both working remotely and on campus. It really provided a connection and made students feel that they were able to meet and understand how services can benefit each of them individually.

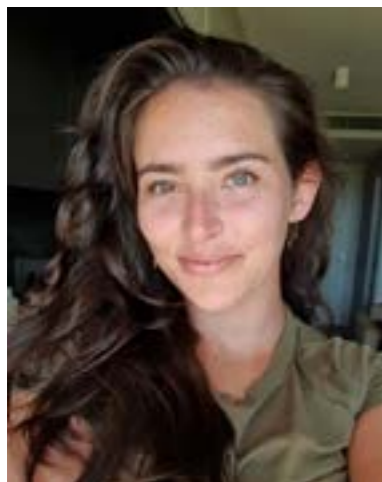
The program further touched on how students could access academic support with an interactive session with Shannon Woodcock, who helps coordinate the Ngarara Willim Tutoring Program.

We were very lucky to have current student Clint Hansen join the program sharing some of his experiences and opportunities that he has been involved in like attending Indigenous Uni Games, Global opportunities and being a part of the Ngarara Willim Community. Clint also spoke about how accessing support and surrounding yourself with a team of support people was a key to success. Clint started with RMIT in Vocational Education and is now studying his Pre-Doctorate.

Gama-dji was also an opportunity to introduce the Ngarara Willim Dhumbali Program. A series of cultural activities that students can participate in throughout the year.

Leaves of Change

Congratulations Ngarara Willim student Louisa Bloomer who has won the 2021 RMIT Indigenous design competition. Louisa, a



Kamilaroi woman, Indigenous Art Designer and a current student in the Bachelor of Fashion (Design) at RMIT has won the branding design competition and will have her artwork featured on RMIT's digital channels.

Louisa Bloomer Student

I created this piece in recognition of our abilities to change to a new way of life after Covid.

The winning piece titled 'Leaves of Change': *The bright swirling colours within each leaf represent the changing tides in all aspects of our lives, and the positivity of what may come next. This design is inspired from spotting flickering red leaves amongst the green of a gum tree in my backyard. With this design I wanted to depict the vibrant and fresh start we all face on this planet in 2021.*

Student Spotlight: Thomas Watson



Whose your Mob?

Gangulu, Yiman, Garingbal

What are you Studying?

Bachelor of Health Science/Applied Science (Osteopathy)

Tell us about yourself (Your background/your journey)?

As a child I grew up mainly in the northern territory in a small town called Katherine not far from Darwin which is where I completed pre school and primary school. In Katherine I played Aussie rules football and competed in athletics (triple jump was my favourite event). Once I finished primary school my family move to Townsville where I finished year 8 and 9 at Kirwan state high school where I played rugby league.

My family and I moved back to Melbourne where I was born which is where I have been since. I started playing basketball, finished my high school and have since been studying at RMIT for 6 years this year. I have done so many cool things, met so many amazing people and made a lot of great memories at university that I will cherish forever.

What/Who inspired you to study at RMIT?

Originally I didn't want to go to University, I was going to become a tradesman. I later decided that I would give it a go which is a decision I am very glad I made. I didn't really have an inspiration to go other than my own internal decision to give it a go. I had a great support system around me with my family who were happy with what ever decision I made.

What was it like transitioning to university?

The transition was pretty easy. I made a lot of friends in my earlier year at uni through Ngarara Willim which helped with the transition a lot. It is much different from high school because the onus is on you to put in the work to learn. It isn't the teachers responsibility to keep you on track.

What do you enjoy most about engaging with Ngarara Willim?

Ngarara Willim has been the place I have been most comfortable my entire uni career. The staff and students are all so supportive and you create a bond with all of them very quickly and easily. It's a really good place to feel at home when at uni.

What does Ngarara Willim "Gathering Place" mean to you?

Exactly what the name infers. Its a place all the mob from RMIT can gather, talk, study, learn and be comfortable around and with other mob.

What's your proudest moment/achievement while studying at RMIT?

I think winning the 2017 Men's basketball MVP at Indigenous Nationals was my proudest moment so far.

What is your message to community members considering studying at RMIT?

Give it a go like I did, you won't regret it! The mob at Ngarara Willim are the best support system you could ask for the staff and students make you feel right at home. You'll be very comfortable surrounded by mob who're in the same position as you.

Deadly Alumni: Takysa Brennan

Who are you? Who's your mob?

Takysa Brennan, Palawa

Tell me about your RMIT experience.

What did you study?

I studied a Bachelor of Pharmaceutical Science.

How did your course influence your career?

My course helped me find my passion for public health and health policy. My degree taught me a lot of transferable skills that can be used in any job like stakeholder engagement and different methods of research.

What are the top three things you have learned in your career?

I am sorry for these answers, but they truly are the best advice anyone can give you!

1. *Network* – your network is your most valuable asset.
2. *Ask questions* - Everyone is always willing to help you or explain things in a different way. At uni and in the workplace, people want you to succeed, let them help you.
3. *Be yourself* – be proud of you! Only you can do what you do.

What are your plans for 2021 and beyond?

My dream is to one day travel overseas if that is ever possible again. I'd love to go to South American and see the Mayan and Aztec temples and experience the rich cultures.

Realistically I am working to give back to community and provide as many opportunities to our younger mob.

Takysa Brennan

Deadly Alumni

My biggest take away from RMIT are the relationships I developed with Ngarara Willim staff, students, and Alumni.



What are you up to now? Work and life?

I am an Indigenous Development Officer at Ventia. In my role I get to work in change management in the Indigenous space, in community engagement and in the Gender diversity space. I am also a part of their

graduate program that I can't recommend highly enough to anyone who is graduating or has just graduated.

Can you tell us about your journey into University?

I graduated High School in Albury NSW and got accepted into a Bachelor of Pharmaceutical Science. With the help of Ngarara Willim I got a room at the then brand new Wollert House (Unilodge) in Bundoora which was one of the best experiences I have had.

What did you enjoy most about engaging with Ngarara Willim?

The amazing people I got to meet! I also had some really cool experiences such as Indigenous university games (3 times), Deadly science day mentoring and National Indigenous Students Conference.

What would your message be to our mob who may be considering studying at RMIT?

DO IT!

Ngarara Willim has excellent facilities, unparalleled support and services for students, they have endless opportunities, and everyone is kind and welcoming.

How are you still connected to RMIT and the Ngarara Willim community?

I am still working at the RMIT Sports Centre. Also, I still see Ngarara Mob for social events when COVID permits it.



Join our Deadly Alumni
facebook page

The Great Aboriginal People

Simon Rose is a Birriah/Gurreng Gurreng man based in Melbourne. Most of our readers will know Simon who has worked and studied at the Ngarara Willim Centre and RMIT for over ten years and had recently left to pursue his passion of producing and developing films and documentaries. Simon has a background in film and writing but also follows his creative endeavors of photography and visual arts from an Indigenous lens and perspective.

Simon has been in Melbourne for a long time, although he is a Murri from North Queensland. He has family who have lived here in the Kulin Nations for years, from both his mum's (Fishers) and dad's (Johnsons) sides.

Simon has been developing his film production skills across documentary, corporate video, dramas and commissioned content for several years. Simon has worked with some well-known and respected people.

Some of his credits include:

- Maree Clarke Cultural Warrior,
- [Let's Talk Treaty](#),
- [The Story of Tunnerminnerwait & Maulboyheenner](#), and
- [Sorry: a video response to the National Apology to the Indigenous Australian Stolen Generation](#).

Simon was also the Indigenous Directors attachment to ABC TV's Miss Fishers Murder Mysteries and worked as a factual research intern with Rachael Perkins' Blackfella Films in Melbourne.

Simon's influences, which you can see reflected in his work, are mainly from our mob. He says he has always admired the ones who were brave enough to keep going in the face of adversity and ridicule, it showed the strength, courage and resistance that our mob have inside. He admires the works of Ivan Sen (Goldstone), Warrick Thornton (Sweet Country), Tracy Moffat (BeDevil) and even Danish Director, Lars Von Trier (Dogville).



Simon recalls his parents taking him to see films like *Star Wars*, *Jaws* and *Alien* at the cinema which totally influenced him to be interested in film. The first film Simon ever made was in high school. He describes it as a "terribly terrible chase film!" Simon is captivated by film because of the possibilities of what you can do with it, it stems an endlessly creative process for him.

Although COVID has brought about disruption in the film industry Simon feels that it has a strong, well thought-out process that has kept productions going well during this crisis. It has also allowed Simon to look forward to the new possibilities and projects that 2021 will bring – he has a few local productions to make as well as producing, co-producing and directing some of his own narrative ideas.

We look forward to seeing these productions at The Capitol Theatre when the restraints ease and we can walk to the red carpet with Simon.

If you are looking to have an Indigenous lens on screen production, reach out to Simon and his team via his [LinkedIn](#) or email swproductions@me.com.



Simon Rose and Deb Mailman

New Staff: Shannon Woodcock

Hi Everybody ! My name is Shannon and I'm the new Academic programs tutor co-ordinator at Ngarara Willim. I love working with students because writing an essay is really just like telling a story about a great weekend to friends, and helping to make learning interesting and fun is my thing.

I'm white and I was born in Meanjin. After school I studied languages and history at QUT, then left Australia and ended up in Romania. There is a lot of racist violence in Romania from the white Romanians against Romani people, who Romanians kept as slaves since the 1600s. Now there isn't slavery, but all the stereotypes that white people made to steal labour from Roma are still used to treating Romani people as inferior.



L-R: Pasha, Shannon, Guxim

I wrote my PhD about how racism works in Romania, and I learnt a lot from Romani people about how to fight white supremacy. I was always thinking about how to apply the things I learnt as a white person there to life in 'Australia'. I did my post-doc at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum and worked closely with a few First Nations representatives in Washington DC, then I came back to so-called Australia and lectured in genocide studies at La Trobe University.

Now I am finally doing what I have been preparing for: I am working with you amazing students, and writing history under the direction of the Gunai Kurnai Community here. I am currently co-writing a book with Kurnai Monero Ngarigo man, Rob Hudson, which is called *First Nations Museum Spaces and Colonial Contestation: The Keeping Place* (Routledge, 2022). It is all about the work Rob does at the Krowathunkooloong Keeping Place in Bairnsdale, and it shares some stories of how strong people have been throughout colonial occupation.

In non-racist-fighting news, I live with three cockatiels, and I love swimming and watching Catfish.

Do you need a Tutor?

When you work with a tutor, not only do they help you understand your assignments and help motivate you, you also have someone who can cheer you on and listen to what you think about the course. The tutors we have as part of the Ngarara Willim Tutoring program have already done the course you are currently in.

Click on the link to sign up for [Tutoring today!](#)



Meet our staff



Nicole

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Manager
Indigenous Student Education



Jason

Tharawal
Senior Manager
Indigenous Education



Cathy

Irukandji
Senior Advisor
Indigenous Access and
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Lewis

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Our Artists

Leaves of Change — Louisa Bloomer
Leaves (watermark) — Alanna Sandy
Ngarara Willim Centre logo — Mandy Nicholson

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