

RMIT UNIVERSITY

NGARARA WILLIM CENTRE

FOR ABORIGINAL AND  
TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

ISSUE 11 AUGUST 2021

# NGARARA WILLIM NEWSLETTER



# Womin Djeka!

## Welcome to the July edition

## Significant and important dates

- August 30 – September 3 – Mid Semester break
- 1 September – Indigenous literacy day
- 9 September – Last day to design a platypus for the Journey of Mapiyal
- 13 September – Anniversary of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous people

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Womin Djeka (Welcome)! It's Guling (orchid) season, the end of the cold weather is in sight. Orchids and Muyan (silver wattle) are beginning to flower and Ae-noke (caterpillars) of the Common Brown Butterfly feed on grasses at night and the star Arcturus can be seen on the North-Western horizon soon after sunset.

We're moving into mid-semester break at the end of August, so remember to take some time out to rest and relax before we head into the second half of semester. In our August newsletter for 2021 we've featured the Indigenous Solidarity Art Project Kimberly Lovegrove has championed through RUSU alongside artist Indianna Hunt.

Our student spotlight focuses on Yuin student Hayden Ryan this month, recipient of the AAA Aurora Indigenous Scholarship. This month's Deadly Alum is Candice Bowditch who has some awesome career advice for mob. Coming up, Shannon is encouraging you all to sign up for the Waring book club (details on page 8), and we celebrate Kimberly Lovegrove as she finishes up her role as RUSU Indigenous Officer.

A reminder once again that the entire Ngarara Willim team is here to support you despite lockdown continuing. Please reach out if you have any questions or just need to yarn and in the meantime, enjoy mid-semester break!

## On the cover

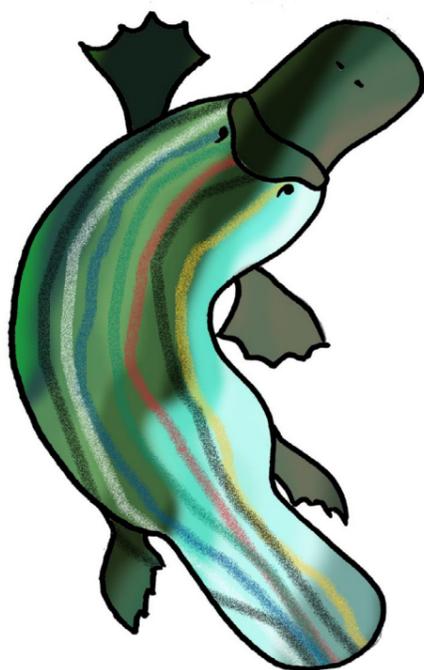
On the cover this month we've featured some deadly artwork by Anaiwan woman Ellie Cooper, which will be featured on Ngarara Willim's next round of merchandise. Head to page X to read more about Ellie and the inspiration behind her design. We've also included some exciting artwork by Charlotte Franks, a Gubbi Gubbi woman and one of our deadly alum, whose design is going to feature on a Graduation Pin for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students later this year.



# Design Your Own

## Platypus

Join the Journey of mapiyal by adding your own platypus to The Burrow.



For those of you that haven't heard about The Journey of Mapiyal yet, this Solidarity Art Project is the second collaboration between RMIT Student Life and RUSU and includes consultation with Ngarara Willim. Championed by RUSU Indigenous Officer Kimberly Lovegrove. Indianna Hunt is the artist behind the project. She is a proud Wemba Wemba, Gunditjmara, Jardwadjali, Wergaia woman. She is an emerging visual artist who enjoys exploring different media and connecting people through art. Solidarity Art Project creatively communicates the value of respect and solidarity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and for people from all backgrounds to feel safe on campus.

This month, you're invited to join mapiyal on our city campus by adding your very own platypus design to the project.

### Get Involved:

- Download one or all of 6 platypus templates.
- Decorate your platypus. You may do this digitally or print out. \*Come up with a design that reflects your own identity.
- Create as many platypus' as you like.
- Take a photograph of your platypus, or simply save a digital copy, which will become a part of the animation to inhabit The Burrow after mid semester break.
- Upload the digital copy at: <https://forms.office.com/r/Vt9hDi8jLu>
- Keep your mapiyal to remind you of the creative pledge you have made in solidarity with - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Keep an eye out on our socials at mid semester break to see mapiyal come to life as the

# Student Spotlight - Hayden Ryan



My core subjects have given me the tools to critically think about the projects and jobs I will undergo. I really value learning about music related concepts from a philosophical and academic lens, as these will create the foundation of my understanding when it comes to post-graduate study and career pathways.

What are your plans for 2021 and beyond?

I am planning on applying to study a Master of Arts in Music, Science and Technology at Stanford University in the USA. My goal is to eventually complete a PhD in Indigenous sound science, and specialise in spatial sound research.

I have received the AAA Aurora Indigenous Scholarship to pursue study at Stanford, so I'm hoping that I will be able to head to the US next year to undergo this Masters program!

Who are you? Who's your mob?

I'm Hayden Ryan - a Yuin man from the South East Coast of New South Wales.

Tell me about your RMIT experience. What did you study?

I'm about to begin my final semester of a Bachelor of Arts in Music Industry.

My time at RMIT has proven to me that I am capable of achieving any career or study goal that I set myself. I began my undergrad studies as a performing musician with the dream of becoming a successful artist, but instead I am finishing up with the intention to complete a Master of Arts and PhD.

RMIT has provided me with some wonderful opportunities. I have travelled to Malaysia to complete a study tour, experienced what it is like to intern at Warner Music Group, and completed some pretty cool creative projects.

How did your course influence your career?

Having the opportunity to explore electives has really influenced my career aspirations. Taking highly practical classes in the areas of acoustics and sound design has shown me how my current skill set can be adapted to advanced sound engineering practises.

What are you up to now? Work and life?

At the moment, I am planning my major project for my final semester, and building on the skills I will need to complete this project.

Other than that, I've been collaborating with other musicians on small music projects!

What did you enjoy most about engaging with Ngarara Willim?

Ngarara Willim have been amazing supporters during my undergraduate years. They have provided a comfortable space for Indigenous students to study and socialise in, and provided us with experiences that I don't think I would have found anywhere else.

The team has organised global mobility and leadership programs which I have had the pleasure of being a part of, and motivate students to pursue these opportunities.

I have enjoyed being a part of Ngarara Willim, as they have really helped myself and all Indigenous RMIT students to reach for the stars and achieve our academic and career goals.



## Deadly Alumni - Candice Bowditch

Who are you? Who's your mob?

My name is Candice, I'm from the NT. I grew up in Darwin, my mob are Larrakia and Wadjigan on my father's side and Arabunna on my mother's. I am a Security Engineer at Google. In my spare time I like to volunteer as a mentor in cybersecurity. I've been in lockdown for most of 2020-21, and as a result I've become very invested in Stardew Valley and other games.

How did your course influence your career?

I initially started out in Games Design at RMIT, then switched midway to Computer Science. I found the change in degree opened up a lot of pathways, including internships, a CSIRO Computer Science cadetship and a few scholarships which supported my ability to study full-time or gave me access to platforms and communities that helped galvanize my career. These opportunities gave me credibility, but also allowed me to explore cybersecurity as a career, something I did not previously consider an option for me. I still am passionate about Games Design, and hope to start to contribute to the open source community in future.

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

- As a First Nations person, it is a radical act of defiance to simply be you.
- Ruthlessly pursue your passions, when it comes to your aspirations - do not take no for an answer.
- You are not alone. Take stock of and surround yourself with supporters, mentors and advocates. Uplift your community as you go.

What are your plans for 2021 and beyond?

It's important to me to continue to support the creation and success of pathways to education and industry for First Nations in tech and cybersecurity. Equally, I hope to build my expertise and begin to participate in international working groups and councils in cybersecurity advisory. I'm eager to expand my career within Google, as a subject matter expert in various technical domains such as exploitation development and malware reverse engineering, but also counterterrorism, human rights advocacy and national security and cybersecurity policy.

What are you up to now? Work and life?

I'm in Sydney, in lockdown. I live with a black kitten that my team at work named Cloudflare (after the company), but her government name is Misa. I work during the week, and in my spare time I try to balance volunteering and community outreach. This year I've had the privilege of being a mentor for the ANSTO Science Week Hackathon, and a speaker for ASPI Indigenous Cyber & Digital Skills Conference. Someone also kindly nominated me for the AWSN Women In Cyber Awards, category: The One To Watch In IT Security.

Can you tell us about your journey into University?

Throughout my schooling I demonstrated passion and skill for IT. I always did well in those subjects and won numerous awards and accolades. I did not receive any career counseling or advice, it was usual for Indigenous students to not graduate high school. I won a scholarship to do the International Baccalaureate, but I was very disengaged from my education at that stage and left school. I did not know a Computer Science degree existed, and was strongly encouraged to pick sport or art as a career. Despite dropping out of high school (IB), I decided to later undertake a Games Design degree at RMIT, which was through portfolio application and interview. Midway I did an internal transfer to Computer Science. I felt I had finally found a missing piece of myself and that this degree would enable me to actualise a lot of my ideas and passion. I soon discovered there was an institutional and industry perception about me, and people like me that placed an expectation for limited potential. I was told on a few occasions that I got into CS, or got X through "unfair advantage" and was often reminded to "lower my expectations." The term "diversity hire" was weaponized against myself and others, particularly in my early career. I've chosen to be honest about these negative experiences, because I want to demonstrate how false and untrue they were in retrospect.

I know that many of you will have similar experiences both inside of academia and outside in industry, but you must prevail at all costs. When we show up in force and champion each other, we begin to dissolve stereotypes, but we also make it harder for discrimination to secretly thrive. I think this is a part of our self-determination journey. At this stage in my career, I feel deeply supported by my colleagues and believe I can flourish. It's the first time I have felt "safe", to be myself, to not fear discrimination and have my contributions seen.

What did you enjoy most about engaging with Ngarara Willim?

Ngarara Willim was a sanctuary for me at RMIT, I found myself leaning on them for support but also community. They do outstanding work and do their utmost to help students. Their esteem in me during my studies helped me overcome many obstacles.

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

If you want to be there, you belong there. There is a seat for you at that table. There are far more people who want to support you, who have your back and your best interests at heart. Choose to give energy to those people, choose yourself, back yourself.

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

Primarily through the alumni network, I would like to stay engaged and share opportunities and support mob however I can. Please feel free to reach out to me on [linkedin](#).

# Waring Book Club

Join the Waring Book Club with Shannon this Summer, you'll receive three books in November to read through and opportunities to yarn about each book with your fellow NW students.

Email  
[ngarara.willim@rmit.edu.au](mailto:ngarara.willim@rmit.edu.au)  
to register!

## Reflections on RUSU with Kimberly



This month, we yarned with Kimberly Lovegrove as she reflects on her time as RUSU Indigenous Officer.

What made you interested in RUSU initially?

I'm very passionate about ensuring blackfullas have a voice and are being heard. I've been a student representative since my VE studies and have absolutely loved it.

What was your experience like as RUSU Indigenous Officer?

I've absolutely loved it. I've worked hard to decolonise the space and ensure that RUSU is a culturally safe space.

What is your favourite achievement / memory during your time in the role?

My favourite achievement would be doing a acknowledgment of country session with RUSU student reps, this helped student reps to better understand the fundamentals of why we do acknowledgment of country

What skills did you develop/ get to employ during your time in the role?

The skills I developed was to better understand other student groups and using my passion for having our voices being heard.

What would your advice be to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students thinking about getting involved with RUSU?

My advice would be get involved with any events. It's a great way to meet other like minded students that are at RMIT. Getting involved is also a great way to speak on any issues your passionate about because RUSU can advocate for you to make change.

## Winning Merchandise Design 2021



Last month we invited designs from Ngarara Willim students to be used for our next round of merchandise and we received quite a few submissions, all of them very impressive. The Ngarara Willim team settled on Ellie Cooper's design and we're excited to share her artwork with you.

Ellie Cooper, is a proud Anaiwan woman born on Wiradjuri land, now residing on Wurundjuri soil. She is currently a first-year student here at RMIT, studying a Bachelor of Science (Deans Scholar, Environmental Science) (Honours).

Ellie explains "The narrative of this work symbolises the unification, connection and optical presence of traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to their art and land. The connection between mob and land is present through the array of circles, each representing a different mob from across the homeland. The colours of the piece are a symbolic illustration of land, leaves and sun. Through these earthy tones we re-establish the connection to the land in a way that expresses a contemporary alternative to traditional Aboriginal dot painting. We acknowledge and welcome each person of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent from across Australia into our RMIT Ngarara Willim community."

We'll keep you posted when Ngarara Willim merchandise with Ellie's design becomes available!

## Graduation Pin Design 2021



In 2021, we've decided to produce a graduation pin for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduating students. We sought design submissions from both current students and our Deadly alumni and settled upon a design submitted by Charlotte Franks, a Gubbi Gubbi woman and recent RMIT graduate.

Charlotte says of her design "The mana gum design is reflection of a student's journey and growth, roots are planted and leaves grow and sustain the plant – only then can it flower. The flowering of the gum can be seen as a symbol of success, coming out on top, but on an individual level it can be viewed as personal growth.

The upward direction of the branch is also for the movement and journey and potential to reach new heights. The flowers are meant as more of a celebration, like fireworks rather than a botanical element.

The underlying pattern is an abstract form of the roots system for the mana gum but also of the people, support and connection that one needs in their journey to thrive. In Ngarara Willim, students and staff from different backgrounds come together often and support one another, building strong bonds and support systems. The asymmetrical nature of the design shows the various influences one would gain as they move along in their journey, it isn't perfect but can create perfection (the symmetry of the leaves and flowers).

The colours are not common earth tones, but more of the sky and spirit. I chose the red/pink for the root & journey system as it embodies powerful energy and the background is a deep and speckled navy to emulate the night sky and the heights one can achieve. The white of the mana gum contrasts with all the colours but can functionally be changed to suit the setting of promotion and merchandising."



# Meet our Staff



**Nicole**

Arabana  
Manager  
Indigenous Student Education



**Evander**

Gunditjmara, Wemba Wemba  
Indigenous Student Education  
Officer  
Indigenous Education



**Carlie**

Coordinator  
Indigenous Student Education



**Jordan**

Ngarrindjeri, Wemba Wemba  
Coordinator  
Indigenous Outreach



**Shannon**

Officer  
Academic Programs



**Annie**

Gomerioi  
Coordinator  
Communications & Events  
Indigenous Student Education



## Connect with us

[ngarara.willim@rmit.edu.au](mailto:ngarara.willim@rmit.edu.au)  
(03)9925 4885



[Join our Mailing List](#)

[ngarara.willim@rmit.edu.au](mailto:ngarara.willim@rmit.edu.au)

### Our Artists

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

City Campus  
Building 5, Level 1, Room 5  
Bowen Street, Melbourne, VIC, 3001

Bundoora Campus  
Building 202, Level 3, Room 21  
225- 245 Plenty Road, Bundoora, VIC, 3083

Brunswick Campus  
Building 514, Level 1, Room 3  
25 Dawson Street, Brunswick, VIC, 3056