

RMIT UNIVERSITY

NGARARA WILLIM CENTRE

FOR ABORIGINAL AND
TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

ISSUE 12 DECEMBER 2021

NGARARA WILLIM NEWSLETTER



Significant and important dates

25th December – Christmas Day Public

26th December – Boxing Day

1st January – New Years Day

4th January – RMIT re-opens & Summer Semester Begins

26th January – Invasion/ Survival Day

11 February – Summer Semester ends

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Womin Djeka! Welcome to the July edition

Womin Djeka (Welcome)! It's Garrawang (Kangaroo Apple) season! We're experiencing changeable, thundery weather with long days and short nights. Dhuling (Goannas) are active and Buliyong (bats) are busy catching insects in flight. The year is now drawing to a close and this will be our last Ngarara Willim Newsletter before welcoming in 2022.

This semester, 104 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students graduate at RMIT. Everyone at Ngarara Willim is so proud of your efforts and persistence, and in this issue we wanted to celebrate you, our graduates. We look forward to welcoming you into our Deadly Alumni community and keeping connected as you continue and commence careers, or move on to further study. RMIT held it's graduation ceremony this month on the 15th of December, and we held a small graduation reception after the ceremony where graduates were invited as well as their family and friends to celebrate with us.

Also during this month and the end of November, the team at Ngarara Willim grew considerably. We have welcomed six new staff members, who're introducing themselves in this issue and looking forward to meeting you all face-to-face in the new year. We also farewell Shannon Woodcock, our Officer of Academic Programs. Thank you Shannon for all your hard work and best of luck!

Early next year we will also be welcoming our new Pro-Vice Chancellor, Gary Thomas. We're planning busily for Gary's arrival and looking forward to making your study next year as fulfilling and supported as possible.

As the holidays draw close, we've also decided to help raise funds again this year for VACCA's annual Christmas Appeal. This Appeal happens each year and the money raised supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are in foster care, kinship and residential care and vulnerable families in our community. [You can donate here](#), and we encourage you to share your support across your networks as well.

Congratulations again to all our students and have a safe and happy holiday period!

On the cover



On the cover this month our a few of our recent graduates, from left to right, Jasper Hamm (Diploma Conservation and Land Management), Rhys Nayna (Diploma of Youth Work), Canisha Clemmet-Kennedy (Bachelor of Health Science/ Bachelor of Applied Science (Osteopathy)), and Israel Carter (Master of Design Innovation and Technology). Congratulations Jasper, Rhys, Canisha and Israel!

Congratulations to all our graduates this year! Studying during a pandemic has been no easy feat but everyone at Ngarara Willim and throughout RMIT is proud of your achievements, and we're sure your families and communities are too.

Deadly Graduate - Beau Windon



Beau Windon is a neurodivergent writer of Wiradjuri descent. He's just finished his Bachelor of Arts (Creative Writing) and has already secured some high-profile publishing and performance work. Congratulations on Graduating, Beau!

"Being neurodivergent, I'm very used to feeling alienated and isolated from society, so in my writing I like to explore these feelings and hope it can make others feel a bit less alone.

Thanks to the support and guidance of his tutor, David Carlin, an essay that he wrote for a course was accepted for publication in a major national literary journal.

Since then, he's been recognised with fellowships and residencies from the Emerging Writers' Festival, Varuna National Writers' House and Writers Victoria. He's managed to secure funding from Creative Victoria and the City of Melbourne to continue to develop some major writing projects.

"I'm currently applying for more funding opportunities so I can further develop my major projects. I'm hoping to have them in good enough condition to start submitting to publishers next year." But first, he has to graduate.

"It feels bittersweet! I don't want to leave the nest. The creative writing program at RMIT is such a motivating community to be a part of." To read Beau's full story and his advice for future students, [click here](#).

Deadly Graduate - Hayden Ryan



Despite the difficulties of studying during COVID-19, RMIT music industry graduate and Yuin man from Narooma, Hayden Ryan has made the most of every opportunity as an RMIT student.

"It honestly feels amazing [to be graduating]. I'm glad that I have completed my first university degree and upset that I must move on, but the future seems to hold some exciting things for me, which I look forward to."

After completing his first semester Hayden took a three-week study tour to Malaysia with students from Ngarara Willim, the trip helping to influence his future aspirations. Following his trip, he landed an internship at Warner Music Group as a part of his work-integrated learning component and co-facilitated a Global Leadership session with Archie Roach and Mitch Tambo.

Outside of his coursework, Hayden is developing M.O.O.N (Music Of Our Nation), a platform for First Nations sound art that includes a prototype app called Djagula. The app will eventually be an archive of playable Aboriginal instruments that will allow the user to digitally interact and compose with the music.

To read Hayden's full story, [click here](#). Congratulations on Graduating, Hayden!



Deadly Alumni - Tahnee Edwards

During Melbourne's last lockdown we had the opportunity to yarn with Tahnee, founder and owner at Gammin Threads. Since lockdown, Tahnee has worked on a pop-up store at Melbourne Central, and showcased her designs at Melbourne Fashion Week. You can view and shop her deadly designs at <https://www.gamminthreads.com/>

Who are you? Who's your mob?

My name is Tahnee Edwards, I'm a proud Yorta Yorta & Taungurung woman, designer and community engagement worker. I studied an Associate degree of Fashion Merchandising at RMIT, I have a small side hustle called Gammin threads and I work part time at an Aboriginal family violence org called Djirra.

What did you learn throughout your course that you have applied to Gammin Threads?

Trend forecasting, product development and marketing are the main things, all the stuff I love. Running the actual business is the boring side but

I'm happy with what I've achieved so far, no one in my family or anyone close to me has business experience, so I've just learnt it along the way.

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

You learn more being on the job than at school.

Your personality goes a really long way and can sometimes be more important than your skills (it was for my role at Djirra anyways).

Don't be afraid to take mental health days.

What are your plans for 2022 and beyond?

I want to grow Gammin and start doing overseas manufacturing, like proper product development. I also would love to have a social enterprise helping young women who want to get into this space.

What are you up to now? Work and life?

Lockdown life was really uneventful but I'm grateful I have a side hustle to keep me occupied.

Having said that, it feels like all I do is work, but I think that's common when you have your own business.

I'm waiting for season 5 Insecure to come out, which is my favourite tv show, and then daydreaming about holidays to Cairns or Darwin.

Can you tell us about your journey into University?

Neither of my parents went to uni but it was drilled into me from a young age that I would be going, they just wanted me to have more opportunities so they thought you had to go to uni to achieve this.

I got a really bad ATAR score in year 12 cos I just didn't put in the effort and I chose subjects that were way too ambitious, so I did year 12 again and got a good enough score to get into Visual Communication (graphic design) at UniSA. Then I worked as a designer for a few years before looking up courses in Melbourne and found Fashion Merchandising at RMIT which was pretty much my dream course which I thought would lead to my dream job. So I applied as a mature age student and packed up my life and moved to Melbourne.

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

I loved studying something that I was actually into, especially coming from a small country school which had no creative subjects, so to come to a place where they teach you stuff that you're actually really into was so deadly. I much preferred studying at RMIT, I think it was a mix of being a bit older and knowing exactly what I wanted, and it was also just a better experience. I understood what was expected of me and I just loved what we were studying. So my message is definitely don't be too hard on yourself to know exactly what you wanna do when you're straight out of high school, it might take you a few years to work out what you're passionate about. But I think if you're interested in studying at uni just apply.

It's a fun experience, you meet people who are into similar things as you, there's support like Ngarara Willim, and if you decide you really don't like it just defer or drop out.

What inspired you to start your own business?

I didn't want to have my own business or brand, I just wanted to create designs that I actually liked instead of working for someone else whose values don't align with mine. So in 2018 I was coming out of a massive creative block, and it was a mix of the NAIDOC theme "Because of her we can" and the work I was doing at Djirra that just inspired me to create these designs that showed my love and admiration for blak women. And so I made a website to sell them and I needed a business name as I didn't want to use my own, so I just came up with Gammin threads as it's my favourite blak word and that was it.



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Deadly Graduate - Michelle Gissara



"I'll always be community focused, looking at mental health and why people may commit crimes."

Congratulations to Michelle Gissara, an inspirational Kardu Diminin woman, Gissara is already using her own lived experience and studies to make a difference in her community and beyond.

Michelle explains how she found her way into her honours program, and what inspired her. "I started at RMIT University as a mature-aged student at 28, after first completing an Advanced Diploma in Graphic Design and Advertising, followed by some freelancing work. I've always enjoyed watching crime shows and documentaries and I thought a degree in criminology and psychology sounded really interesting.

I also have two passions, which is helping people who have experienced sexual violence because I have lived experience of historical sexual abuse, as well as Indigenous justice and helping people within my community.

After completing my Bachelor of Criminology and Psychology at RMIT in July 2020, I wanted to further my studies and increase my knowledge, so applied to do a Bachelor of Justice and Criminology (Honours) to focus on a particular thesis topic of image-based sexual abuse representation in news media accessible to Victorians."

To read the full interview with Michelle, [click here.](#)

Deadly Graduate - Tom Watson

Whose your Mob?

Gangulu, Garingbal and Yiman

What are you Studying?

Bachelor of Health Science/ Bachelor of Applied Science (Osteopathy)

Tell us about yourself?

I am a proud blackfulla born in Naarm but raised mostly in the Northern Territory, while also spending some of my childhood in Queensland. I originally was not going to attend university and wanted to become a tradesman, but one day just decided to give it a go, and I have never looked back since. I originally started my university career studying exercise and sport science but met a friend of mine at my work place who was studying Osteopathy. After working with her shift upon shift, she completely sold the profession to me. Here I am 6 years later about to graduate as Dr Thomas Watson... Crazy stuff.

Culturally I have grown a lot at RMIT with Ngarara Willim, without going to university I may have never even known where my mob was from. But one day at Gama-Dji (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander orientation) I met a girl who I had to speak to as part of an Ice breaker activity. She ended up being my cousin (her great grandfather was my great grandfather's brother - what a small world!) she told me our people are Gangulu. This was a very heavy and special moment which started me on a whole other journey separate to my studies. Since that moment I have met loads more family from back in Queensland and started reviving our traditional language. And we are very gradually on the way to writing a Gangulu dictionary!

What/Who inspired you to study at RMIT?

I think I inspired myself to go to university, I had great support from my family, but it was a decision I made for myself.

What was it like transitioning to university?

Transitioning to university was great. I came straight out of school – something I didn't really enjoy (besides lunch times) and thought uni would be just like school was, but it's actually very different. Everything is on you to do the work and if you don't, then it's no one's fault but your own. This isn't a bad thing though, because generally you're studying things that you're interested in - because you picked the degree! University is hard, but it is also so rewarding. And now that I am about to graduate, I couldn't be prouder of what I've been able to do whilst I was at RMIT, I have made lifelong memories and friends and grown considerably as a person.



What do you enjoy most about engaging with Ngarara Willim?

The sense of community and support. Ngarara willim is always willing to bend over backwards to help the students with anything they need, the staff are amazing and so are the students! I have made so many awesome friends and memories over the last 6 years at Ngarara Willim, from indigenous unigames (now known as indigenous nationals) to just relaxing or studying in the Ngarara Willim centre. I couldn't think of a better indigenous centre to have been apart of for my university career.

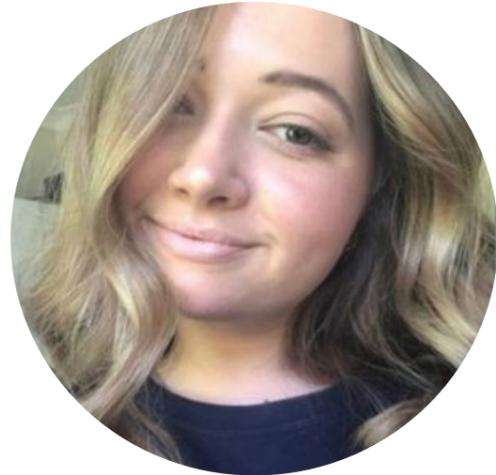
What's your proudest moment/achievement while studying at RMIT?

This is a hard question; I think number one is completing my degree and being the first in my family to do so. Second would have to be being a team member each year for indigenous nationals because it is the highlight of my university year every single year. There is nothing more fun than travelling to a different state for a week and representing your university and state in a competitive and culturally safe environment completely surrounded by deadly blackfullas.

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

You cant go wrong! I was torn between studying at university or becoming a tradesman, and I am so grateful I decided to study at RMIT with Ngarara Willim. If nothing else, you make beautiful friends and memories and gain an experience you never would have if you didn't decide to study at RMIT.

Meet Our New Staff



Adelle Hutchings - Officer, Indigenous Student Education

Adelle is a proud Wonnarua and Wiradjuri woman from regional NSW who has recently moved to Melbourne. Adelle has completed a Bachelor of Commerce and a Graduate Certificate in Indigenous Trauma Recovery. Prior to joining the Ngarara Willim team she worked in various high schools as an Aboriginal Education Assistant and completed various internships with CareerTrackers while completing her university studies. Adelle is passionate about supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in higher education and celebrating Indigenous excellence.

Jarian Lake - Officer, Indigenous Student Education

Jarian is a proud aspiring Indigenous man from Dubbo NSW. His people resided along The Macquarie River, and he proudly identifies with his mother's Wiradjuri clan nations. Jarian has worked many years in the Indigenous outreach sector and higher education space for many years. His vision is to see every indigenous person become the best version of themselves through university and education pathways. He is very happy and honoured to now work at the RMIT, where he believes he can make a difference.



Tyali Nelson - Trainee, Indigenous Administration

Tyali is a Proud Jaara/Dja Dja Wurrung, Yorta Yorta & Wiradjuri woman from Central Victoria and has been living and working in Naarm. She has had a progressing history of customer focused roles which is what led her to this current role. This has helped continue her passion to help to give back to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in creating a safe and supportive space for our youth in education.



Talia Elliott - Senior Advisor, Indigenous Access and Engagement

Talia is a Bundjalung and Yugambeh woman from southern QLD who has lived in Melbourne since 2015. Talia has a Bachelor of Business from Griffith University and prior to joining the Ngarara Willim team she spent 6 years working to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university students into internships as well as previous experience in the RTO (Registered Training Organisation) space. Talia is passionate about supporting student's aspirations to further education as well as seeing students have access to a community of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students while studying.

Tristan Lenaz - Officer, Indigenous Careers

Tristan is a Proud Trawlwoolway man of the Palawa people, born and raised in Northeast Victoria. He has a bachelor's degree in Business/Sport Management and a Major in Aboriginal Studies at La Trobe University. Prior to Tristan joining the Ngarara Willim team he worked as an Indigenous Recruitment Consultant, within Melbourne's Major civil construction projects. Tristan is passionate about supporting Students ambitions to create greater opportunities throughout their further education and career journey.



Emily-Kate Salmon - Officer, Indigenous Student Education

Emily is a proud Torres Strait Islander woman from northern Queensland, she moved to Melbourne in 2012 and has worked at RMIT since late 2017 assisting with the applicant, student, and selection lifecycle as well as being an escalation point for systems support. Whilst working at RMIT University, Emily has found a passion in supporting Indigenous students to ensure their studies are enjoyable and fulfilling.





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



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Our Artists

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

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