

RMIT UNIVERSITY

NGARARA WILLIM NEWSLETTER



ISSUE 5 SEPTEMBER 2020

Ngarara Willim launches student designed facemasks

MORE ON PAGE 3





Significant and important dates

25 September – Games Night: Iso-treasure hunt

11 October – Scholarships application CLOSE

23 October – Thank You Day Public Holiday

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Womin Djeka!

Welcome to the fifth edition

Spring is here! In the Kulin Seasons, it is the time of the poorneet (tadpole) season where flax-lillies are flowering and the pied currawongs call out a strong, loud call - which is how the bird got its name.

It's when the yellow flowers appear on the native yam daisy, or murnong, and the tubers or roots are dug out and eaten. They are an important food source for Aboriginal people from the rivers of the Birrarung Marr to Gariwerd.

We wanted to thank all our readers for keeping in touch with us and reading about our activities during the past few months. As we come into the warmer days, we hope there is more of a spring in your step and that you look forward to more activity with the longer days.

In this issue, you will read some stories from our students, including those who live in accommodation and how they have been supported by Ngarara Willim Centre and RMIT.

We also have a story from our Deadly Alumni, Ron Murray. Ron talks about his musical group Kinja and what he has been doing while in lockdown.

We share a little on our recent partnership with Weenthunga Health Network and share our plans on working together. Make sure you register for the 'Racism in the classroom, How do I respond?' online event Weenthunga are delivering this Thursday 24th September.

Don't forget to check out our awesome new merchandise. We have facemasks designed using artwork by our deadly students and Alums Louisa Bloomer and Taylah Cole and a special piece of art that was developed in collaboration between Ngarara Willim students and staff. Visit ngararawillimcentre.com to purchase your face mask today.

Applications are open for anyone interested in studying at RMIT, also don't forget to apply for scholarships as applications close on Sunday 11th October. If you need support with your application or anything else, please call Ngarara Willim Centre on (03) 9925 4885 or email cathy.doe@rmit.edu.au

As we continue to be impacted by change here at RMIT, we farewell colleagues who have supported our students and impacted their successes and our Community over the years. We encourage you all to continue to support each other through these challenging times. Take time out, engage with the outdoors and check in with family and friends.



On the cover

The Ngarara Willim team have launched a website for people to purchase face masks featuring designs made by students past and present - including a one off colour design of the "Campus" design created collaboratively by Ngarara Willim and a team of students.

We'd like to thank Yilay for the production of the face masks.

The sale proceeds will go towards future Ngarara Willim student and community events.

Visit the site:

www.ngararawillimcentre.com

Yilay: yilay.com.au

Student Spotlight: Canisha Clemmet-Kennedy



Name: Canisha Clemmet-Kennedy

Mob: Trawlwoolway

Course: Double Bachelor of Health Science & Osteopathy

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

Throughout high school, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. When I learnt about exercise and sports science pathways at RMIT, I took that opportunity. After studying exercise and sports science and gaining experience through work placements, I realised that it wasn't my desired career path. I formed a connection with one of my lecturers and we had great conversations about Osteopathy, which helped me realise that's where I would like to take my study journey.

After that, the Ngarara Willim Centre really helped with this change and set up an interview with the Osteopathy program manager.

After being successful in the interview, I transferred to my current course and I am now seeing my grades significantly improve!

What/who inspired you to study at RMIT?

I couldn't pick between RMIT and another university. I went to both Open Days and RMIT's open day felt a lot more welcoming for me. It was the Ngarara Willim Centre that helped me with applying and made my first few weeks of Uni comfortable.

What/who inspired you to study at RMIT?

Starting off was difficult, and I wasn't originally enjoying what I was studying. I also had to adjust to what studying was like at University as it is very different to high school.

When I did make the decision to transfer courses, I started enjoying my studies more. I also got into a great routine and figured out what study techniques work best for me.

What do you enjoy most about engaging with Ngarara Willim?

Growing up I didn't know a lot about my family ties and my mob. Being around the Ngarara Willim staff and students has really helped me feel stronger in my identity. The Ngarara Willim Centre genuinely helps make my university experience a lot better.

What do you enjoy about your campus location?

I study at the Bundoora Campus and I really enjoy the Keelbundoora Scarred Trees and Heritage Trail, I have learnt so much from walking through that trail.

What's your proudest moment/achievements since studying at RMIT?

In my first year of Osteopathy, I'm really proud to say that I maintained higher than a 3 GPA, which was much higher than when I first started in exercise and sports science.

During my study journey, I also obtained work in the membership team at Essendon Football Club!

As part of my cheerleading team, we competed in the world championships that was hosted in America!

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

Ngarara Willim feels like my family away from home, everyone is so welcoming, and I don't feel like a stranger. I feel like I can be shy in a different setting, but when I'm in Ngarara Willim, I'm yarning with everyone!

What would be your message to community members thinking of studying at university?

Don't be afraid to make contact or ask questions. Also remember that your study journey doesn't have to be solidified, there are plenty of options and support if you change your mind!

Hoodie designs a team effort

Ngarara Willim staff and students worked together on developing a uniform for 2020's Indigenous Nationals-University Games. Unfortunately due to Covid-19 the Nationals were postponed but we think the design was too deadly not to bring out and show off!

The final design was the work of a collective of Ngarara Willim students who brainstormed concepts and contributed to further refinement of the final product.

The design is focused around the three Melbourne campuses of RMIT and the two rivers flowing between and connecting them, the Birrarung (Yarra) and Mirring-nay-bir-nong (Maribyrnong). The layout is a very rough placement of where each campus resides in relation to each other.

The largest circle represents the City campus, which combines the designs of Bundoora and Brunswick as well as original patterns that reflect not only the size of the City campus sprawling throughout the CBD but also it's multicultural influences from people within and external to the university.

Brunswick campus features designs that emulate the creativity that takes place on the campus, more organic and freeform shapes. Bundoora's design is more in line with the science and education teachings, it has more structure with straighter linework, and some inspiration was taken from microscopic cells. The thicker border near the outer rings signifies the scar tree walking track/trail located on the campus.



Student Stories

We reached out to some students to ask them how Ngarara Willim has supported them through their educational journeys so far.



Mijawi Mansell White Bear

My name is Mijawi Mansell White Bear and I am from Bruny Island southern Tasmania. I am studying a Bachelor of Architectural Design and I am in my first year. I moved up to Melbourne from Hobart Tasmania at the beginning of semester 1 2020, but after three weeks I returned to Tasmania due to COVID.

Ngarara Willim have supported me throughout my whole involvement with RMIT; there was support from the beginning of my application for my degree in late 2019 and throughout the semesters there has been additional help with tutoring and scholarships. Ngarara Willim has made it clear that there is always support, all you have to do is give them a call or send an email and there will always be someone on the other end more than happy to help.

The scholarships Ngarara Willim have provided me with and or helped me obtain have made a massive difference in not only my study life but also personal. They have been spent on school supplies such as a new laptop, drawing and modelling equipment, rent, food and bills. Being given these scholarships has made me feel extremely grateful and proud. I feel that these scholarships are pushing me and motivating me more as I know I am being given so much support.

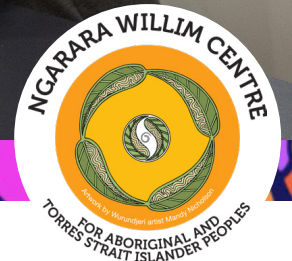


Shylicia McKiernan

My name is Shylicia McKiernan and my mob are from Masig (Yorke) Island – Kala Lagaw Ya language group. I am studying a Bachelor of Urban and Regional Planning (Honours) at RMIT. I moved to Melbourne from Cape York in QLD to study at RMIT.

The Ngarara team assisted me with my application for the Bachelor degree and they supported me to gain entry into my chosen program through the Indigenous access program. The staff were always helpful when classes were face-to-face and I was new on campus.

I was awarded the Gama-dji Grant for participating in the Gama-dji Orientation program before I started studying. I was also awarded the RMIT Indigenous Study Scholarship. As all scholarships were instalments over periods of time and as we ended up in the unprecedented circumstances of the current pandemic, the scholarships have assisted with week-to-week supplies needed for home (groceries, utilities etc.) as well as helping me purchase textbooks required for my current degree.



Studying at RMIT

The team at Ngarara Willim are here to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are considering study in 2021. While some future students might be confident in their choices about what to study, others may need assistance understanding the application process, or need help choosing the right program for their career aspirations. We are keen to help all applicants successfully transition into further education at RMIT.

Application Support

The Indigenous Access Program helps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people gain entry into RMIT programs. Applicants must meet the prerequisites and extra requirements for their chosen program, but will sit an interview to ensure you understand and achieve your educational aspirations, making sure you're off to a great start at RMIT.

RMIT offers Vocational and Higher Education programs. This means there's plenty of choice about the level and type of study available. You can find more about what's on offer by visiting rmit.edu.au/study-with-us

Pathways are a great option if you're returning to study, want to build a good foundation in your chosen field, or considering a more practical learning experience to ease into higher education. A pathway allows you to meet the prerequisite for your destination degree while gaining a qualification. You can find more information about pathways by visiting pathways.rmit.edu.au

Contact Us

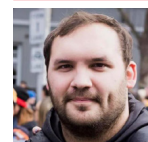
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To see if you're eligible visit
rmit.edu.au/students/support-and-facilities/student-support/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-students/eligibility





CareerTrackers

Summer Internship Program

RMIT continues strong partnerships with CareerTrackers.

While most of us have been impacted by Covid-19, CareerTrackers have continued supporting our students in gaining industry experience. Their Internship Program places our students into some of Australia's leading organisations and puts our graduates ahead of many others.

Combining quality education and meaningful, relevant industry engagement makes the transition from education to work seamless. The students graduate 'industry ready' and the employer gains a 'work-ready' employee. It's a winning combination and our students are reaping the rewards.

Student support is never far from being a key component to the success of these programs. Our students benefit from the support that Ngarara Willim Centre provides, as well as support from the RMIT Careers and Employment Services and the CareerTrackers team. Often these support services work simultaneously ensuring that that student feels like they are supported at every point of the program.

Not only have the team at CareerTrackers been working hard to secure future opportunities for students in what will be tough economic times, but they have also been asking companies to commit to the ongoing provision of graduate opportunities for students who are ready to hit the workforce.

One of our students, Michael Clinch, has engaged with the CareerTrackers Program during his studies, and now will walk away from RMIT University not only a Bachelor of Design in Digital Media, and work experience through his internship with National Australia Bank (NAB) and now a Graduate Position.

Why did you choose to study at RMIT?

I chose to study at RMIT because it was a Design school.

I didn't fully know what I wanted to do, and they offered a lot of design courses that were very broad and allowed me to explore many opportunities.

What was the appeal of joining CareerTrackers?

The appeal of CareerTrackers was having the opportunity to gain real life work experience in the professional environment. I really thought it would help me find direction in my professional career.

What advice would you give to your younger self (before you started your tertiary studies)?

Enjoy university while it lasts, it's a short time so make the most of it while you can.

Have you found a graduate opportunity? If so, where?

I have found a Grad role - this is at NAB as a Graduate of Digital and Design.

Did you find it difficult to secure a graduate role?

I was able to get the role through doing an internship over the summer at NAB - so through the hard work I put in over the summer, and being able to prove myself to them, I got the opportunity. Hard work pays off!

Do you feel like CareerTrackers gave you the tools needed to secure a graduate role?

Yes, CareerTrackers gave me the tools to be more confident in interviews and in the professional environment. They also provided the opportunity for the internship so that's always a good start in obtaining a role.

What was the most surprising thing you learnt during your internship period last summer?

Most surprising thing I learnt is that there is a massive design world in corporate companies such as NAB. Never when I started university would I think that I would end up working in design at one of the big four banks, but here I am.

Would you recommend CareerTrackers to other Indigenous students looking for help with career pathways and why?

I would highly recommend CareerTrackers; I wouldn't have these opportunities without CareerTrackers. It's definitely worth it for your professional career as well as your social life. I have made so many friends through the program and through the internship.

There are still several opportunities available for students studying Business-related degrees, as well as Engineering, Technology and Science. Students can register for the program through the CareerTrackers website at careertrackers.org.au

Weenthunga Health Network

Weenthunga and Ngarara Willim have again collaborated to create wellbeing packs for young women who participate in Weenthunga's Nyarrn-Gakgo Mangkie program. These packs include materials to support young women engaged in this program in their study endeavors. The packs include useful information about opportunities that exist at RMIT University and a range of other items to maintain engagement during lockdown.



These packs include:

- Ngarara Willim fliers, booklet, hat, lanyard and ruler
- Coloring pencils, screen wipes, anti-bacterial wipes, notebook with pen and information from **Indigenous Allied Health Australia**
- Reusable face mask and fact sheet
- A copy of the book **"Girls Can Fly" by Sally Morgan & Ambelin Kwaymullina**
- Irmangka-Irmangka Bush Medicine from the **NPY Women's Council**
- Weaving packs from **Tjanpi Desert Weavers**
- Milk Chocolate graphics bar with design from Kalkadoon woman, **Chern'ee Sutton**
- Sistahood stickers from **Gammin Threads**

Event: Racism in the classroom, how do I respond?

The Weenthunga Health Network hosted an event 'Racism in the classroom, How do I respond?' via Zoom on Thursday 24th September. The event was co-hosted by Weenthunga's Ashley Paxton and Danielle Amiet.

This event discussed experience as educators in the space, it looked to address racism in the classroom and within spaces at your workplace.

Eighty participants came together to reflect and share experiences when racism occurred in their space and discussed ways forward.

Topics explored:

- How do we educators respond to racism in the learning space?
- What is the difference between implicit and explicit racism?
- What are microaggressions?
- The intent versus the impact of racism.



Deadly Alumni

Uncle Ron Murray

Uncle Ron Murray is a Wamba Wamba man, his totem is the red-tailed black cockatoo. He is a cultural advisor and educator, storyteller, musician, didgeridoo maker and wood sculptor.

He is one of our Deadly Alumni who received his Masters in Arts (Education) from RMIT University in 2009. His thesis looked at how Indigenous knowledges can combat racist attitudes in the wider community. He has been employed by Victoria Police, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and is currently working with Indigenous youth in the justice system.

Uncle Ron Murray has remained connected to RMIT through his performances at our graduation ceremonies in recent years.

Where were you born?

Uncle Ron was born up in Swan Hill, on Wamba Wamba country. He has also lived in Balranald and has worked in different areas but still calls Wamba Wamba country his home. Uncle Ron is the only boy of seven kids.

What do you remember about growing up?

One of the most memorable experiences that I had was when my dad was made an Australia Day Ambassador. We flew to Sydney to meet with the other Ambassadors. This left an impression on me. I know that a lot of Aboriginal people don't like the Australia Day celebrations, but this experience and my dad's explanation helped me to think differently about it. My dad showed me that Australia Day could be a stage and a platform and he used that platform to teach the audience of non-Aboriginal people what this day meant to Aboriginal people. He found ways to get his message across to non-Aboriginal people and to educate them on his own terms without protests. He gave me a positive outlook and experience on things that are important to me and inspired me to promote reconciliation through music.



Uncle Ron Murray Deadly Alumni

I really enjoyed seeing this reconciliation between the cultures and enjoyed watching the young men sharing because it was a good healing process.

Your thesis at RMIT focused on ways that Indigenous knowledges can combat racist attitudes by using the power of positive stories. What is the best example of this in practice that you have experienced?

I have taught Cultural Training over the years and have had to explain to the participants in the training to think from the point of view of lived experience. I have taught them through stories about experiences, not from books. I have found that sharing personal experiences and by sharing stories it is easier to teach people about our people and cultures.

When I was teaching one of my toughest audiences, the Victorian Police, I realised that this audience were sometimes “forced” to attend these training sessions by their workplace. It made for a tough audience when many of them didn’t want to be there. One day, a female police officer came to me after the session and admitted that she was one of the people who didn’t want to be there at the beginning. She told me that in the end, she was glad she did attend. She told me that her sister was married to a Yorta Yorta man and that during the session, she had cried, and laughed. She also told me that she had realised that she had a lot of things to sort out in her family.

What is Kinja and what does it mean?

Kinja is a Indigenous-Celtic fusion duo that Sarah James and I collaborate on. Sarah James plays the fiddle and is the vocalist. Through our music we bring together the cultural heritage of our ancestors.

Kinja started when we were sitting by the dry river beds of the Margaret River on our honeymoon. I was playing my didgeridoo and then classically trained Sarah pulled out her fiddle and it was then when it just “came together”. As we played I looked up and saw my totem animal the red-tailed black cockatoos in the trees - I knew it was meant to be.

When we first started going out and playing our music in venues we couldn’t think of a name. When we played, the people in the audience would often hear our songs, like Danny Boy, and they would get emotionally upset and tear up. I asked them what was upsetting them and they would say that the songs “reminded them of home”.

Kinja means “My home” in Wamba Wamba language.

What are the highlights of your career?

I really enjoyed working in the legal services at Parkville and Malmsbury Youth Justice Centre. I would go in and speak to the young men and would take the didgeridoo and play for them. I enjoyed watching them listen and take in the music. This evolved into a project where the young men, in groups of 6-10, began making their own didgeridoos. I remember a time where they got called racists because the non-Aboriginal men in these facilities wanted to join in too but as the funding was only for Aboriginal people, there was a problem. It was then sorted out so each young man could bring in a non-Aboriginal friend to share our culture. I really enjoyed seeing this reconciliation between the cultures and enjoyed watching the young men sharing because it was a good healing process.

Have you done any virtual performances during COVID-19 ?

Yes, we have done a few events. One NAIDOC event at the Bes Murray Community Centre (named after my dad) on Muthi Muthi country in Balranald NSW.

It was one of the best I have done and I was really impressed with the facilities there.

How do people book you?

kinja.com.au - or you can come to one of our performances, see how amazing we are and grab one of the best business cards on the market – our CD!



Meet our Staff



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Our Artists

Trees — Louisa Bloomer
Leaves (watermark) — Alanna Sandy
Ngarara Willim logo — Mandy Nicholson
Graphic/layout design — Charlotte Franks



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