Indigenous Strategy Highlights 2017–2019 provides a snapshot of just some of the University of Melbourne’s recent and extensive work with respect to our Indigenous strategic priorities. Categorised under five themes, of central importance in all our highlighted activities is our commitment to ‘Leadership for Change’. Through this commitment the University seeks to create positive social impact and foster a healthier, more inclusive and fairer society. In the Australian context, this involves the development and recognition of Indigenous leadership and the recognition and advancement of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives.

Addressing the themes of: Place, Community, Education, Discovery and Global, the flagship Atlantic Fellows for Social Equity Program and the Melbourne Poche Leadership Fellows Program are two of our most innovative and exciting programs. Driven by Indigenous people and informed by Indigenous perspectives, both prioritise Indigenous agency and will contribute to a transformative change agenda.

The University of Melbourne acknowledges and pays respect to the Traditional Owners of the lands upon which our campuses are situated.

- Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung peoples
  Parkville, Southbank, Werribee and Burnley campuses
- Yorta Yorta Nation, Shepparton and Dookie campuses
- Dja Dja Wurrung people, Creswick campus

We recognise the unique place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples hold as the original custodians of the lands and waterways across the Australian continent with histories of continuous connection dating back more than 60 000 years.

We also acknowledge and respect our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff, Elders and collaborators, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who visit our campuses from across Australia.
At the University of Melbourne, the Yolŋu philosophy of bala lili informs our engagement with Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and, in particular, our current Indigenous strategic priorities.

**Indigenous students and staff**

With 425 Indigenous students (54 in Research Higher Degrees) and 145 Indigenous staff (including 50 academic staff with a professoriate of 10), ensure continued good progress towards our challenging participation and success targets.

**Indigenous Knowledge Institute**

With a $6 million investment the University has launched the Indigenous Knowledge Institute, an Indigenous-led, place-based catalyst for transformational educational and social change.

**Yothu Yindi Foundation Partnership**

To further progress our partnership with the Yothu Yindi Foundation supporting social, economic and cultural advancement for Indigenous people in Northeast Arnhem Land.

**Goulburn Valley Indigenous partnerships**

To build upon our deep and significant partnerships with the Kaiela Institute and the Rumbalara Football and Netball Club, and further develop a future-focused strategy for the Goulburn Valley that contributes to Indigenous self-determination and prosperity in the region.

**Relationships and collaboration with Traditional Owners of the Melbourne area**

To develop a coordinated approach to the University’s relationships and collaboration with the Traditional Owners on whose land the University’s largest campuses are located.

**Cultural Collections**

To ensure our focus on our cultural collections includes extensive and best practice consultation with Traditional Owners that embeds access to, engagement with, and agency in the governance and management of Indigenous collections.

Walking alongside and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, University staff and students will work to uphold the rights of Indigenous Australians to self-determination, and the pursuit of cultural, social and economic development.

The University will deepen relationships with Indigenous Australians, respect and increase our understanding of their intellectual traditions, and work in partnership to create new knowledge and a culture of reconciliation for all Australians. In this way the University can be a leader in the recognition and advancement of Indigenous knowledge and intellectual traditions nationally and on the global stage.
Reconciliation is central to the full realisation of the University of Melbourne’s purpose. For true reconciliation to occur, we need to foster an environment in which the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their fellow Australians is characterised by a deep mutual respect, leading to positive change in our nation’s culture and capacity.

The manifestation of our vision for reconciliation requires the University to make commitments to:

- Truly engage with, and learn from, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations
- Embed Indigenous cultures and knowledges in the University’s research, teaching and learning, and engagement activities
- Demonstrate an understanding of, and deep respect for, the traditions, heritage, knowledges and perspectives of the many nations and language groups that make up Indigenous Australia
- Reflect Indigenous cultural heritage in the University’s physical environment
- Ensure that our campuses are places where Indigenous peoples feel culturally safe and are treated with dignity and respect.

From Reconciliation Action Plan, April 2018–December 2022 (RAP3)
Ancestral Memory launches Old Quad renewal

Located at the heart of the Parkville campus in the Old Quad, the Ancestral Memory exhibition tells the story of water on the lands of the Kulin Nation. Diving into the history of Old Quad’s location upon the lands of the Kulin Nation, Jefa Greenaway says, “[w]hat transpired from this research was that the story of water has always been and continues to be very important to this place. It is a story that traverses the campus.”

Jefa Greenaway is a descendant of the Wailwan and Kamilaroi peoples of north-west New South Wales. He is an award-winning architect and interior designer who, as part of his practice, provides support and advice regarding all aspects of architecture related to Aboriginal people in Victoria.

Maree Clarke is a Mutti Mutti/Wemba Wemba/Yorta Yorta/Boon Wurrung artist. A renowned cultural ‘revivifyer’, Clarke has been active in reclaiming the visual/material culture of her Ancestors and re-thinking this in line with her lived experiences as a contemporary southeast Australian Aboriginal artist.

A central feature of the exhibition, Maree Clarke’s dramatic glass eel trap shares both ancient and contemporary connections. Displayed alongside two woven eel traps, the distinctive patterns and methods of weaving connect these items to place, to a series of waterways running thick with eels and ancestral memory.

Greenaway assures us that “[t]he eels continue to swim through the storm water pipes of the University. They rear their heads up in some of the ponds and storm water grates that exist on the campus.”

A powerful demonstration of resilience, Clarke’s Ancestral Memory launched the Old Quad into the next chapter while keeping a firm grasp on the past.
Embedding Indigenous cultural heritage within the natural and built environment

The University of Melbourne recognises that there are opportunities to improve the physical experience of the University community through shaping the built and natural environment to promote Indigenous cultural awareness and recognition.

RAP3 commitments under the Theme ‘Our Place’ will see the development of Indigenous narratives for each of the University’s campuses and a Research Colloquium on Place and Indigenous Cultural Recognition to internally promote critical and scholarly engagement with our institutional history – including our colonial and eugenics history – and our historical relationships with Indigenous Australians.
Stop, listen and learn at Garma

The University of Melbourne formalised its long relationship with the Yolŋu people in Northeast Arnhem Land in 2015 through a partnership with the Yothu Yindi Foundation (YYF). This partnership, a RAP3 Signature Project, is a central component of the University’s commitment to national reconciliation with Indigenous Australians.

In 2019, Vice-Chancellor Duncan Maskell led a University delegation of 30 senior staff and students to the 21st Garma Festival in Northeast Arnhem Land. The University is a principal sponsor of Garma and its Key Forum, which has become Australia’s leading policy conference on Indigenous affairs. Attended by more than 2500 business, political, education and philanthropic leaders, key topics included constitutional recognition, economic development, funding for remote communities, health and education.

Associate Provost Professor Marcia Langton believes the benefits of this partnership lie in the exchange of knowledge. “Our faculty members learn about the culture, ceremony and philosophy of this ancient culture and the University contributes its expertise to the Yothu Yindi Foundation vision of a strong future for Yolŋu people,” Professor Langton says.

“Our presence at the Garma Festival aims to inspire our faculty and students to learn from this unique opportunity to stop, to listen, and to learn the wisdom so generously offered by traditional Yolŋu Elders.”

Read more about the importance of the University’s partnership with Yothu Yindi Foundation and the Garma Festival at:

pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/the-power-of-garma
pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/truth-telling-at-garma

Teaching and learning on Country

The University of Melbourne has partnered with Yirrkala Homelands School since 2011 to provide selected pre-service teachers with the opportunity to complete a two or four-week, self-funded placement.

In the traditional lands of the Yolŋu in Australia’s Northeast Arnhem Land there are a network of small Homelands schools, officially called Homeland Learning Centres (HLC). The Homelands Movement was initiated in the 1970s and involved the movement of small Indigenous communities back to their ancestral lands where HLCs have been established in some of these intentionally and remotely positioned communities.

Since 2011, more than 60 students have participated in placements, in rural and remote settings, including in Northeast Arnhem Land. Of these, 18 graduates have returned to teach in Northern Territory schools.

Following Garma, the University of Melbourne received a generous gift of US$500,000 from New York-based Atlantic Philanthropies, a limited life foundation, to strengthen the University’s strategic partnership and relationship with the Yolŋu people and the Yothu Yindi Foundation in Northeast Arnhem Land. The funding will support additional engagement and two-way learning opportunities for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the broader community, with a focus on education and cultural heritage projects.
Enduring value of engagement in the Goulburn Valley

The University of Melbourne’s partnership within the Goulburn Valley region is a Signature Project of RAP3 reflecting our history of engagement with the region and, importantly, with the local Aboriginal leaders and community. The University has committed to contribute to the social, economic and cultural advancement of the Yorta Yorta Nation in the Goulburn Murray region, and has outlined several Target Measures to enable this aspiration, such as developing a regional procurement strategy.

Investing in regional excellence

In 2018, the University of Melbourne signed a Heads of Agreement to be a partner of the state-of-the-art and purpose-built Munarra Centre for Regional Excellence (MCRE) within Shepparton.

The University’s involvement in the project is through support of the Academy of Sport, Health and Education (ASHE) that will be relocated within MCRE and renamed Munarra Academy upon completion of the build. The MCRE is scheduled for completion in 2022, with the Academy providing an education platform with a strong focus on strengthening and embedding Aboriginal culture (with a distinct focus on Yorta Yorta) across design, the curriculum and programming. It also aspires to create employment pathways and opportunity for the local Aboriginal community.

A holistic, place-based approach to education

In 2004, the Rumbalara Football Netball Club, in partnership with the University of Melbourne, established the Academy of Sport, Health and Education (ASHE). ASHE was formed to provide young Indigenous people with a culturally safe educational setting and support for their transition to employment or further education. In August 2019, ASHE had 101 students enrolled in VCAL or other offerings. Each year ASHE graduates approximately 35 students across a range of training and educational programs.

Longterm partnering in flagship Goulburn Valley event

In support of the Kaiela Institute, the University contributes to the annual Dungala Kaiela Oration (DKO), delivered on Yorta Yorta country at the Rumbalara Football Netball Club in Shepparton. The Oration is the Kaiela Institute’s flagship event, celebrating Aboriginal cultural identity to create a shared vision for the people of the greater Goulburn Valley region and promote Aboriginal development.

Forging a deep and true partnership with Traditional Owners of the Melbourne area

In August 2019, the University of Melbourne’s Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice Chancellor (Indigenous) shared a lunch for the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation Elders and staff. The lunch was an opportunity for the Vice-Chancellor to meet Corporation members and staff, and listen to their thoughts about how the University can better work with the Wurundjeri community.

University staff from the Vice-Chancellor’s Advisory Group, Deans, and other selected academic staff with relevant areas of expertise attended, providing an opportunity for Corporation members to connect with academic staff who have expertise on native title, education and linguistics.
Engaging with history and co-design principles to create a New Student Precinct

The New Student Precinct will transform the campus-based student experience through co-creation of a vibrant centralised space where all students have access to social, cultural and community opportunities. Realising this Signature Project in RAP3, the Precinct will achieve transformational change and deep cultural engagement, celebrating the multi-faceted aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures through the built and landscape environment, instilling a sense of belonging, and affirming the Traditional Owner’s connection to country.

The Precinct was designed and co-created with students, staff and Traditional Owners from over 40 Indigenous language groups across Australia.

In May 2019, the New Student Precinct partnered with the Living Pavilion to temporarily transform the University’s landscape at the site of the future home of Murrup Barak – Melbourne Institute for Indigenous Development. The site transformed into a haven of biodiversity and Indigenous stories through the installation of over 40 000 Kulin Nation plants, alongside artworks, performances, talks and gathering spaces that celebrated Melbourne’s eclectic flora and fauna.

Read more about the New Student Precinct at: https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/plants-tell-stories-of-cultural-connection

During May 2019 the Living Pavilion, an interdisciplinary project connecting Indigenous knowledge, ecological science, sustainable design and participatory arts, transformed the landscape at the site of the future home of the University’s Institute for Indigenous Development, Murrup Barak, with plantings, artworks, performances, talks and gathering spaces that celebrated the natural environment. Photo Sarah Fisher.
Embedding Indigenous narratives and culture into project design

The University of Melbourne, in partnership with a consortium led by Lendlease, is creating a connected innovation ecosystem in the heart of Melbourne.

Located on the former Royal Women’s Hospital site, Melbourne Connect is committed to embedding Indigenous narratives and cultural recognition within the project’s built and landscape environment. For example, the Woi Wurrung language of the Wurundjeri Traditional Owners will inspire place naming, and the precinct’s colonial and displacement history acknowledged through memory windows, memory trees, digital walls and displays.

This process is guided by Traditional Owners and Elders and the project’s Indigenous Narratives Advisory Group.

Renaming pathways at Southbank

In 2018, in consultation with the Boon Wurrung Foundation, the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music renamed the pathways within the Southbank campus. These names include Yuma-k (Painters) Walk, Dhumba-dha (Storytellers Walk), and Ngarrgee-dha (Dancers) Lane. The pathways connect each artistic discipline with the Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri people’s continuing culture and connection to land. This process supports the revitalisation of local languages and creates opportunities for engagement with Indigenous knowledges and practices.

Increasing numbers of staff, students and visitors walking in the shadow of Billibellary

In 2018 and 2019 an increasing number of students, staff and the wider Melbourne community experienced Billibellary’s Walk, a cultural interpretation of the University’s Parkville campus pre-settlement landscape. Named after the Ngurungaeta (clan head) of the Wurundjeri, the walk provides a narrative from an Aboriginal perspective that considers the social and cultural constructions of place.

Woi Wurrung language naming: Melbourne Connect

- Tongerambi kalk Way (birthing tree)
- Yagila-djerring Walk (learning/searching together)
- Ngang-gak djerring Walk (listening together)
- Toom-djerring Walk (speaking together)
- Womin-djerring (come together)
Cultural Collections

World renowned collection on display at Awaken Exhibition

The Donald Thomson Collection is recognised as the most comprehensive and significant collection of Aboriginal cultural heritage material as listed on the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World register. It includes 7200 artefacts, accompanied by 5300 pages of field notes and 11,000 pages of transcriptions, 10,580 photographic prints, negatives, glass plates and transparencies, 7600 metres of colour film and various sound recordings, approximately 2000 natural science specimens, 400 maps, and over 300 scientific illustrations in pen and ink, ochres and watercolour.

This awe-inspiring exhibition is on show at the Awaken Exhibition at the base of the Arts West building, opened in 2018.

In collaboration with the communities of origin, the collection is of significance to the nation and the world in providing education of the culture of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Collection is increasingly utilised in University of Melbourne curriculum through object-based learning approaches.

Review built on respect and trust to determine agreed future for Donald Thomson Collection

Precipitated by changing international and national standards in the field of cultural heritage management, and the urgent need to connect community to cultural knowledge held in the Donald Thomson Collection within the lifetime of Elders able to interpret that knowledge, a review of the current governance and management structure of the Collection was completed in December 2019.


Consultations were conducted to inform communities of the Donald Thomson Collection Review and gather community views on the future governance and management of their materials in the Collection.

The review consultation methodology, designed and implemented by Carol Christophersen, is ground-breaking work. Carol Christophersen is a member of the Muran and Bunjd clans in Western Arnhem Land and Kakadu National Park. She has family, kin and strong, established community networks across the Northern Territory. She has worked as an anthropologist at the Northern Land Council for 16 years and was acting manager of the Anthropology Branch for two years.

The Review methodology was grounded in a move away from the ‘fly-in-fly-out’ approach historically taken in Indigenous community consultations and focused on building trust and long-lasting relationships with communities, many of whom asked the review team to return.

Consultations were tailored to each community and varied greatly, as each community had distinct interests, opinions and prior knowledge of the Donald Thomson Collection.

A significant term of reference informing the review revolved around the inclusion of communities in the future management of the Donald Thomson Collection, and the consultations and methodology reflected this central goal. The consultations were designed to commence an ongoing program of work to build relationships with all communities of origin represented in the Collection.

The review has also consulted both former and current staff at Museums Victoria and the University of Melbourne and worked closely with the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council as well as members of the Thomson family. The review has broadly consulted stakeholders in the Donald Thomson Collection to gain an understanding of its history and potential in order to recommend the most effective future direction for the Donald Thomson Collection.
The exhibition Awaken was developed in consultation with communities using local knowledge alongside Donald Thomson’s fieldwork notes to awaken stories of the objects and explore the community’s deep and abiding connection with them. Curated by Faculty of Arts PhD candidate, Worimi Nation film-maker, storyteller and Melbourne Museum Director of First Peoples Genevieve Grieves, with Rosemary Wrench and Faculty of Arts alumna Shonae Hobson (Kaantja), Awaken is one of the most important anthropological collections in the world. Photo David Hannah.
Internationally renowned Indigenous Professoriate

Professor Marcia Langton AM
Associate Provost
Redmond Barry Distinguished Professor, Melbourne School of Global and Population Health Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

Professor Shaun Ewen
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous)
Poche Director, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

Professor Sandra Eades
Associate Dean (Indigenous)
Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

Professor Ian Anderson AO
Honorary Professorial Fellow
Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education
Melbourne Graduate School of Education

Professor Alexis Wright
Boisbouvier Chair in Australian Literature, School of Culture and Communication, Faculty of Arts

Professor Barry Judd
Professor Indigenous Studies
Director, Indigenous Studies Program, Faculty of Arts

Associate Professor Michelle Evans
Associate Professor in Leadership, Department of Management and Marketing, Faculty of Business and Economics

Associate Professor Richard Frankland
Associate Professor in Cross-Disciplinary Practice, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music

Associate Professor Luke Burchill
Associate Professor of Medicine
Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

Associate Professor Alasdair Vance
Associate Professor in Child Psychiatry, Royal Children’s Hospital

Associate Dean roles with Indigenous-focus*

Professor Sandra Eades
Associate Dean (Indigenous)
Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

Professor Elisabeth McKinley
Associate Dean (Indigenous)
Melbourne Graduate School of Education

Professor Kirsty Gover
Associate Dean (Indigenous Recognition)
Melbourne Law School

Tiriki Onus
Associate Dean (Indigenous Development)
Faculty of Fine Arts and Music

*Faculty of Arts currently recruiting Associate Dean (Indigenous)
Indigenous development plans for all divisions

In 2019, all Academic Divisions produced Divisional Indigenous Development Plans. Addressing the themes of Indigenous students, Indigenous staff, Indigenous research, Indigenous teaching and learning, and Indigenous cultural awareness, partnerships and recognition, each has been created according to the particular context within which the Division operates.

Partnering with Supply Nation to support Indigenous businesses

The University of Melbourne was the first to partner with Supply Nation. Supply Nation supports Indigenous businesses by encouraging supplier diversity, with every $1 spent through Indigenous businesses creating $4.41 in social return on investment within community.

In 2019, the University developed the Supply Chain Diversity and Inclusion Strategy with year-on-year percentage increase of spend targets through ‘social’ suppliers, increasing to three per cent over the five years from 2019.

A Social and Indigenous Procurement Framework is being developed to further support a diverse and inclusive supply chain.

University of Melbourne Indigenous strategic architecture
Development opportunities for Indigenous professional staff

The Melbourne Indigenous Professional Employment Program (MIPEP) is a two-year program providing meaningful work and on-the-job skills development for Indigenous professional staff. Participants gain a Diploma of Leadership and Management in their first year, undertake enrichment activities and professional development training, and receive dedicated pastoral support.

In 2018, the University of Melbourne welcomed 18 Indigenous staff members through the program, with 14 staff members commencing the program in 2019.

Minjara Atkinson, who commenced in the program in 2013, is now employed as Coursework Admissions Officer within the Melbourne School of Engineering.

“I have gained a lot from being part of the program and had the opportunity to professionally develop across different roles at the University over the past six years,” says Minnie. “This has helped with my knowledge of the University and confidence in the workplace.”

Exceeding Jawun secondment targets

The University of Melbourne is the first University to develop a formal partnership agreement with Jawun, which manages secondments from organisations to Indigenous partner organisations around Australia.

The Jawun Development Program is a two-way learning initiative through which University staff are seconded to Indigenous organisations to work with them on a range of important projects.

In 2019, the University committed to seconding six employees but exceeded this target with 14 staff participating in the Goulburn Murray (Victoria), NPY Lands (Northern Territory), Lower River Murray (South Australia), and the Far West Coast (South Australia). Cumulatively, this reflects 3150 hours of pro bono support.

In 2018, seven University leaders undertook the Jawun Executive Program. Professor Paul Kofman, Dean of the Faculty of Business and Economics described his experience as giving him a much better understanding of the potential of the Indigenous community, and highlighting what that community was already achieving. “There are good news stories to be told,” says Professor Kofman, “and it was both moving and energising to see the work being done with such dignity and respect for the Elders.”

Anastasia Slipper, Senior Improvement Analyst in the Business Improvement Group, Academic Services, was seconded to Njernda Aboriginal Corporation in Echuca, Victoria, from October to November 2018. Njernda’s purpose was to deliver community controlled, holistic services and programs to improve the physical, emotional, cultural and spiritual wellbeing of the Aboriginal Community of Echuca and surrounding areas.

“A key aspect of my project at Njernda was to work with the management team to deliver training workshops and design a professional development roadmap for the leadership group,” says Anastasia. “I also worked with managers to finalise their operational planning, including facilitating a team planning day for one of the divisions.

“It was a great example of the importance of building strong collaborative relationships with colleagues and I was overwhelmed and touched by the openness, generosity and trust that the organisation awarded to us secondees.”

Maryanne Bossen, Finance Relationship Group Manager, attended the 6-week Employee Secondment Program in May 2018 working in Indigenous-led organisations in South Australia. Maryanne worked in the Moorundi Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service in Murray Bridge, and with Elder Uncle Moogy and the Tal-Kin-Jeri Dance Group in Port Adelaide.

“Mentoring up-and-coming leaders in the Ngarrindjeri community was a major part of my brief. I was also able to help implement financial delegations, process improvement with the Shared Service – Ngopamuldi, and advise Uncle Moogy on finance improvements for the Dance Group with his daughter Charlotte. It was a challenging and rewarding experience that required me to work outside of my comfort zone.”

In 2019, the University of Melbourne provided over 3350 hours of pro bono services to Indigenous organisations and communities through involvement with the Garma Festival, the Jawun Program, the Bower Studio and animal health programs in West Arnhem Land, the Goulburn Valley and Gippsland.
Indigenous leadership and strategy central to University progress

In 2018, the University’s Traditional Owners and Elders Reference Group welcomed the new Vice-Chancellor with a formal Welcome to Country. Providing cultural oversight and advice with respect to our Indigenous strategies, the Reference Group has been instrumental in our reconciliation journey.

In 2017, the University recognised the contributions of Professor Marcia Langton as one of the most respected academics in the country through her appointment as the first Associate Provost of the University. Professor Langton leads in specific areas of engagement, cultural collections, heritage issues and development of Indigenous teaching and research activities across the institution.

In 2017, the University appointed Professor Shaun Ewen to the newly created role of Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous). In this role Professor Ewen has responsibilities for leadership of the University’s Indigenous institutional policy, strategy and advice on all aspects of Indigenous higher education.

Promoting reconciliation at the University of Melbourne

In 2019, the Melbourne Reconciliation Network (MRN) was launched during National Reconciliation Week. MRN is an opportunity for the University’s academic and professional staff to positively contribute to improving relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people amongst the broader University community. The inaugural meeting of the MRN took place in October, and already has a membership of over 100 staff.

Celebrating National Reconciliation Week between May 27 and June 3, the University of Melbourne engaged with the wider University community in celebration and recognition of reconciliation to promote strengthened relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous peoples.

National Reconciliation Week 2019 marked the University’s most successful to date, with over 2000 attendances at 33 diverse events hosted across the University’s campuses. Events were rated as having a high to very high impact on their understanding of reconciliation by 97 per cent of participants, with 99 per cent indicating that they would be likely to learn more about Australian Indigenous issues.

Elevate Reconciliation Action Plan launched

In April 2018, during National Reconciliation Week, the University launched its third Reconciliation Action Plan, April 2018 – December 2022 (RAP3), the culmination of a 12-month project directly engaging more than 800 members of the University community.

RAP3 was endorsed by Reconciliation Australia with ‘Elevate’ status, one of only 30 of the 1103 organisations with RAPs nationwide to have done so.

Focusing on 14 Signature Projects with transformational impact, the University has committed to an annual external audit and public reporting on its RAP3 progress.

An external progress report for 2018, conducted by the Nous Group, indicated that 21 of 25 target measures had been met or exceeded with the remaining in progress.

In addition to RAP3, the University has several supporting Indigenous strategies, frameworks and plans (refer page 15). These contain an extensive range of additional projects and initiatives.

“By implementing an Elevate RAP, the University of Melbourne joins a leading group of organisations and educational institutes that have gone above and beyond ‘business as usual’ to embed reconciliation into their core business practices and decision making at the highest level.”

CEO, Reconciliation Australia, 2018
**Target 1**

1000 students enrolled by 2029

Positive progress with 425 Indigenous student enrolments – growth of 30% over previous 2 years

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**Target 2**

Undergraduate to Graduate student ratio to be equal for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students by 2025

Undergraduate ratio 0.88, Graduate ratio 0.97

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**Target 3**

Success ratios between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students at the Undergraduate and Graduate coursework ratio to be 1 by 2025

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**Benchmarking**

Success rates of Indigenous University of Melbourne students, All Domestic University of Melbourne students, and All National Domestic students in 2017 and 2018

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**Retention rates of Indigenous University of Melbourne students, All Domestic University of Melbourne students, and All National Domestic students in 2016 and 2017**

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1 Measures number of graduate students divided by number of undergraduate students for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students

2 Success ratio is success rate of Indigenous students divided by success rate of non-Indigenous students

3 Success rate is percentage of total study (EFTSL) attempted divided by total study (EFTSL) passed

4 Retention rate measures proportion of students in a given year who return to study in the following year
Indigenous student enrolments by place of origin, 2019

Indigenous students from interstate: 50%
From regional Victoria: 14%

Proportion of Indigenous student enrolments by region, 2019

Graduate Research students

In 2019, 11 Indigenous graduate research students commenced at the University of Melbourne, bringing the total number to 54.
Supporting and celebrating Indigenous student success

Rewarding high achievement
In 2019, a record 13 Indigenous students received Melbourne Chancellor’s Scholarships. These high-achieving students enjoy fee exemptions and are guaranteed a place in a graduate program of their choice if they satisfy eligibility requirements. Students also receive a living allowance for up to three years.

Recognising potential
In 2019, a prestigious inaugural Hansen Scholarship was awarded to an Indigenous student for commencement at the University of Melbourne in 2020. The Hansen Scholarship is awarded to talented undergraduate students whose financial circumstances present a challenge to accessing a first-class education. Valued at up to $108,000 per award, recipients are supported through accommodation, an allowance, mentoring and pastoral care.

Awarding excellence
Since 2018, 39 high-achieving Indigenous undergraduate students in the Faculty of Arts have been awarded Indigenous Leadership, Excellence and Achievement Program Scholarships (I-LEAP), ranging in value between $2,500–$10,000. I-LEAP supports the growth and development of high-achieving Indigenous students with scholarships, mentoring and leadership workshops through their secondary, undergraduate and graduate education.

In 2019, I-LEAP piloted Career Conversations – an academic and careers mentoring program that matched 15 I-LEAP scholarship students with University of Melbourne academic and professional staff who have participated in the Jawun Development Program.

Paris Mordecai
Chancellor’s Scholar and future Melbourne Graduate Program staff member

Paris’ involvement with the University of Melbourne started with Murrup Barak, Melbourne Institute for Indigenous Development well before she moved to Melbourne from Lismore, New South Wales, where she lived with her parents and younger sister.

“I went to a high school which did not have a very big Indigenous cohort, so it’s nice to have that at uni, where they are all your brothers and sisters and friends.

The staff at Murrup Barak make contact with Indigenous students after they submit their VTAC forms to assist them with enrolment. “They run a week-long transitioning camp on campus the week before orientation,” Paris says, adding, “I don’t think I could have handled coming to uni without that camp. By the time I got to class I had people I knew, and I knew I had Murrup Barak if anything went wrong.”

Paris’s ATAR of 94.7 gave her the pick of University of Melbourne undergraduate degrees, but she says it was the lower ATAR requirement of 90.00 for Indigenous Chancellor’s Scholars that enabled her to take up her studies, because it secured scholarship funding that otherwise requires an ATAR of 99.90.

“Melbourne was my dream from the beginning.

“Now I’m here and I’m absolutely loving it.”

Read Paris’ full story at discover.unimelb.edu.au/plan/murrup-barak-helping-indigenous-students-settle-into-uni-life
Paris Mondecai, Aspiring Scholars Program mentor, KPMG Indigenous Pathway Scholarship recipient and future Melbourne Graduate Program staff member. Photo supplied.
Making university more accessible

The University of Melbourne’s special entry scheme, **Access Melbourne**, offers guaranteed entry for Indigenous students into degrees in Biomedicine, Commerce, Science, Arts and Design. Entry into courses that include targeted mentoring for Indigenous students – the Bachelor of Arts (Extended) and Bachelor of Science (Extended) – is guaranteed for those with ATARs of 50 and 55 respectively, together with a college place for the first year.

Applicants may be admitted to other courses with reduced ATARs, but places will not be guaranteed.

All Indigenous undergraduate students commencing at the University of Melbourne in the first semester of 2019 received the Access Melbourne Scholarship, with the possibility of further support being offered through college bursaries and University or government scholarships.

Targeted four-year degrees in Arts and Science

In 2019, 52 students enrolled in the Bachelor of Arts (Extended) and 27 students in the Bachelor of Science (Extended). This amounts to 35 per cent of all Indigenous undergraduate students commencing in Arts and Science.

Since its introduction in 2009, 26 students have graduated from the Bachelor of Arts (Extended), with 10 going on to enrol in graduate degrees.

In 2019, the first Bachelor of Science (Extended) student will graduate.

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Ethan Savage

**Bachelor of Arts and Murrup Barak**

- Melbourne Institute for Indigenous Development Ambassador

One of 425 Indigenous students at the University of Melbourne, Ethan Savage says he is on a cultural learning curve.

“Students come from such diverse backgrounds,” says 19-year-old Ethan, who is studying a Bachelor of Arts and is a resident of Queens College.

“Even when Indigenous people who are from Melbourne come in, they learn so much more about all the different cultures that are all around Australia.”

Ethan’s Aboriginal descent is Kaantju and Girramay and his Torres Strait Islander descent is from the peoples of Badu Island.

“At Murrup Barak we have our common space. You have your non-Indigenous friends, but it’s great to have that space where you can connect with Indigenous friends,” he says.

“Murrup Barak provides a good way for us to stay connected with culture and create a family that’s not necessarily blood, but more connected through the University. That’s definitely helped me cope with the whole moving-away-from-family aspect of things.”

Ethan, who was born in Cairns and grew up in Canberra, followed a popular path to the University of Melbourne by applying under the University’s special entry and equity program, **Access Melbourne**, which has a category for Indigenous applicants. The program enabled Ethan to enter the Bachelor of Arts with a yearly scholarship of $5000. He is pursuing a double major in Politics and International Studies, and Anthropology.

“I have received scholarships both from the University and the college that I live at and it’s been incredibly helpful – without it, I wouldn’t have been able to stay here.”
Ethan Savage was supported to study through Access Melbourne and live in residential college through the Indigenous Student Fund. Photo Manley Holloway Clarke.
Encouraging and promoting pathways into engineering

In 2018, 28 Indigenous students from across Australia participated in the Victorian Indigenous Engineering Winter School (VIEWS).

Under the patronage of Professor Marcia Langton, VIEWS received generous support from partner universities: the University of Melbourne, RMIT University, Swinburne University of Technology and Monash University and with sponsorship from Google, John Holland, BP, ARUP, Honeywell and Sypaq.

“The generosity of Melbourne School of Engineering volunteers and staff, as well as that of our sponsors, is inspired by the need to reach parity for Indigenous professionals in the fields of engineering,” Professor Langton says. “In that way, they contribute to making Australia great.”

A recent participant in the VIEWS program considers it one of the best experiences of her life. “I got to meet a bunch of wonderfully, bright, very intelligent, mature men and women who will go out and change the world, and even if they don’t do engineering later in their life, they’ll definitely make a difference in this world.

“I also especially loved the mentors, they pushed us, and made us do well on the camp, which was excellent. I would honestly recommend this camp to other people around Australia... to anyone who is Indigenous, and looking to go down the engineering path or even just to learn and understand engineering, this camp would honestly be the best place to do it.”

Inspiring careers in STEM

The Residential Indigenous Science Experience (RISE) is an exciting week-long camp held at the University of Melbourne to engage Year 9 and 10 Indigenous students with science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) and inspire students to consider a future career in STEM.

“This camp has opened up so many pathways that I had never considered previously. I have met the funniest, most intelligent students and mentors. I can’t express enough how amazing and supportive all mentors have been in trying to give us the best possible experience. A fantastic week overall.”

RISE participant

Raymond Tilmouth

Bachelor of Commerce

Raymond Tilmouth first came to Melbourne as part of the National Indigenous Business Summer School (NIBSS). Less than two years later, he’s studying in the Bachelor of Commerce and thinking of all the places his studies might take him in the future.

Raymond, an Arrente man, grew up in Alice Springs, surrounded by family and community, and fostering a passion for cinema. As he grew older, Raymond began to look at his options, deciding that he was interested in a career in business or law. It was with this in mind that he came to the National Indigenous Business Summer School.

“We have a very high Indigenous population in the Northern Territory, and at most schools they’ll have an Indigenous Liaison Officer. It was the Indigenous Liaison Officer at my school who told me about the NIBSS. I had been looking at – and applying for – lots of opportunities, but this one really stood out to me. It was a fantastic chance to connect with the community here in Melbourne and at the University. I learnt a lot, and I met a lot of brilliant people.”

The NIBSS program served as a foundation for Raymond’s studies in business, and the starting point of a pathway that has led to his enrolment in the Bachelor of Commerce. Now, Raymond is in his first year of the Bachelor of Commerce, and is eager to make the most of his studies. When he finishes his studies, Raymond is eager to return to Alice Springs and use his business skills to give back to the community, but exactly what his future holds remains to be seen.

“I think the moral thing to do is to give back to that community, where I was raised, that gave me so much.”

Read Raymond’s full story at fbe.unimelb.edu.au/newsroom/from-mparntwe-alice-springs-to-narrm-melbourne
Raymond Tilmouth with University of Melbourne Associate Provost Professor Marcia Langton at the 2018 National Indigenous Business Summer School Gala Celebration Dinner. Photo Drew Hopper, I'm Content Photography.
Bower Studio continues to connect on Country

Bower Studio’s relationship with the Gurindji, Mudpurra and Warlpiri people at Kalkaringi and Daguragu in the Northern Territory extends back to 2014 when the community shared their ambitions to develop a culture space to highlight their extraordinary role as pioneers of the land rights movement. The goal is to have this project completed by 2025 – marking the 50th anniversary of the ‘hand back’ of their land.

In the intervening years the University’s Bower Studio has partnered with the community to undertake a series of projects including the extensions to the Karungkarni Arts Centre (Bower 18) and the Wave Hill Walk-off Pavilions (Bower 16). Bower 19’s role has been to prototype a series of informal culture spaces. Using the HomesPLUS catalogue, produced by Bower Studio in 2013, the community commissioned two additional pavilions – the popular Big Shady model – for Kalkaringi’s central park. This initiative complements the Big Shady beside the shop completed as part of the Bower project in 2018.

The flexibility of the Big Shady makes it a popular choice – five communities now have this model.

Read the full story of the Kalkaringi Bower Studio at bowerstudio.msd.unimelb.edu.au/projects/2019-kalkaringi-nt
Graduate Certificate in Indigenous Business Leadership established

The first intake for the Melbourne Business School’s six-month Graduate Certificate in Indigenous Business Leadership will occur in 2020. The course will use an evidence-based interdisciplinary approach to respond to the complex and growing challenges Indigenous business leaders face, and will explore the central tension between profit and purpose at the heart of Indigenous business leadership.

Subjects with an Indigenous focus

In 2018, approximately 2400 students were enrolled in 51 subjects with an Indigenous focus at the University of Melbourne.

In 2018, nine academic divisions offered students the opportunity to learn and work in Indigenous communities.
Incorporating Indigenous perspectives into curricula

The Budj Bim Cultural Landscape in Victoria was included in the National Heritage List on 20 July 2004, and inscribed on the World Heritage List on 6 July 2019.

Gunditjmara Traditional Owners have known for over six millennia that their Budj Bim Cultural Landscape is special. Gunditjmara stories and oral histories document their cultural knowledge, practices, and material culture. This knowledge is supported by scientific research and historical documents.

Thirty thousand years ago their ancestors witnessed the eruption of the Budj Bim volcano, where the Ancestral Being, Budj Bim (Big Head) transformed himself into part of the landscape. Today Gunditjmara refer to their cultural landscape as Budj Bim.

Following an announcement by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) that the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape has been inscribed on to the World Heritage List, University of Melbourne Vice-Chancellor Duncan Maskell congratulated the Gunditjmara people, the Gunditjmirring Aboriginal Corporation and their partners for their successful nomination. He also expressed the University’s pride in working alongside and learning from the Gunditjmara people and hopes of furthering the relationship in the years to come.

Indigenous perspectives introduced into coursework

Indigenous Engineering and Design is just one of the increasing number of subjects being offered to assist students to develop an awareness of, and sensitivity to Indigenous Heritage and Cultural values, and to apply this knowledge across a wide range of contexts.

Offered by the Melbourne School of Engineering, Indigenous Engineering and Design is a subject conducted on country in collaboration with the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owner Aboriginal Corporation at the Budj Bim National Heritage Cultural Landscape at Lake Condah in south-west Victoria.

Students experience a two-way learning exchange, exploring world renowned examples of Indigenous design and engineering developed over thousands of years, including the Gunditjmara people’s aquaculture system, eel traps and stone house settlements.

Embedding Indigenous perspectives in the engineering curriculum addresses the deficit model and helps students move away from thinking of Indigenous people as ‘lacking’ in knowledge, instead valuing Indigenous knowledge and cultural beliefs and practices. It actively involves Indigenous communities in every stage of program development and delivery to build genuine, collaborative and sustainable partnerships.

The result is a rich two-way learning exchange where Indigenous knowledge systems are recognised and respected.
Indigenous Engineering and Design has begun an extended relationship with the Gunditjmara community that now includes both the Faculty of Science and Melbourne School of Engineering in exploring new and exciting ways for two-way learning, and creating opportunities for research.

Students visiting Budj Bim are privileged to receive the support of Gunditjmara Elders and Rangers, particularly Tyson Lovett-Murray, who gives his time and sharing of knowledge with exceptional generosity.

Knowledge sharing is important work. We are all here to learn from each other.

Damein Bell, CEO Gunditjmiring
Traditional Owners Corporation
Subject outline

• Orientation session where students can start to build relationships with each other and the community to support an open and trusting learning environment

• Weekend visit to Budj Bim World Heritage Landscape, where students stay at the former Lake Condah Mission, meet with Gunditjimara Elders and community members, explore the Budj Bim landscape, and investigate the context and setting of possible projects

• Research and exploration of Indigenous Cultural Heritage and particularly of the Gunditjimara community and Budj Bim

• Three-day return visit for deeper exploration of Budj Bim, further consultation with Gunditjimara Elders and Rangers about project proposals, and to collect further data and supporting information

• Student presentations to Gunditjimara community of final project proposal and video of learning experience and reflections.

Learning outcomes

• Awareness of, and sensitivity to, Indigenous heritage and cultural values and experience of applying this knowledge

• Understanding of, and ability to describe and interpret examples of Australian Indigenous engineering and design

• Learning to apply Aboriginal community consultation protocols and principles to communicate with, consult with, and respond to members of Indigenous communities to develop project design briefs

• Problem identification, and solution formulation taking Indigenous community needs and perspectives into consideration

• Increased self-awareness through reflexive practice, including the ability to identify and articulate thought processes and decision justifications.

Originally designed for third-year undergraduate students from across the University, Indigenous Engineering and Design has now been expanded to include Indigenous students enrolled in the Bachelor of Science (Extended) degree and graduate students enrolled in Master of Engineering capstone subjects involving field research at Budj Bim.
Lessons learned beyond the classroom

In open, exploratory, creative inquiry with members of the Gunditjmara community, students are offered extraordinary opportunities to learn and understand:

- How contemporary cultural engagement with the landscape and community’s vibrant renewal activities in reclaiming their cultural heritage, which acknowledges the environmental, cultural, economic and social benefits of being on and caring for Country, leads to healthy people and communities. As the Gunditjmara say in Dhauwurd Wurrung, “Ngootyoong Gunditj, Ngootyoong Mara” (Healthy Country Healthy People)
- Impact of colonisation, wealth of knowledge lost, and the limits of Western thinking
- Pre-colonial knowledge and wisdom of the Gunditjmara in sustainable design of landscape and resources
- History of Lake Condah Mission and Gunditjmara story of colonisation
- Traditional Gunditjmara stone structures such as weirs, races, water channels, dwellings, elaborate eel and fish traps, hunting hides and other constructions whose purpose is yet to be identified
- Traditional and contemporary Gunditjmara knowledge of climate, landscape management, engineering practices of sustainability and land management and aquaculture infrastructure systems
- Importance of Country as a nourishing and inspirational landscape filled with the spirit of creation and rich with significance and stories of the ancestral past.

“This subject has been an incredible opportunity to have and share real, tangible experiences with an Indigenous community. Being able to learn about a significant place through actually visiting and being there is something that I wish more university subjects offered.”

Indigenous Engineering and Design student

“Through explicit engagement with Gunditjmara knowledges and cultural practice, we are letting the Indigenous students know that their own cultural knowledge is a strength and asset for them in science.”

Dr Lisa Godinho
Coordinator, Bachelor of Science (Extended) Program

“I have been deeply moved by the warm welcome extended by the Gunditjmara people to our students. The rich and generous sharing of their Country, their stories, and their culture has resulted in deep and transformational learning well beyond this subject.”

Dr Juliana Kaya Prpic
Coordinator, Indigenous Design and Engineering

The Budj Bim Cultural Landscape, located in the traditional country of the Gunditjmara Aboriginal people in Victoria, contains one of the world’s most extensive and oldest aquaculture systems. Photo Stu Heppell.
HERDC income for research on Indigenous-related topics has increased to $18.54 million in 2018.

HERDC income from projects with at least one Indigenous Chief Investigator has increased to $3.45 million in 2018.

HERDC publications by Indigenous researchers increased to 38 in 2018, more than double the amount from 2013.
Since 2007, Professors Suzanne Pitama (left) from the University of Otago, Martina Kamaka from the University of Hawai‘i, and the University of Melbourne’s Shaun Ewen have worked together as Leaders in Indigenous Medical Education (LIME) to share their research and improve Indigenous health research and teaching Indigenous health to health professionals in training. In early November 2019 they met again at the University of Otago conference to the theme of ‘Pou Arua Poumanu’ (Embedding Indigenous Health Education). Professors Pitama, Kamaka, and Ewen are photographed here with founder and director of IndigenousX Luke Pearson (second from left). Photo Steven Graham/Struan Purdie.
Research units and networks

Forging national partnerships to advance Indigenous research

Expanding understanding of challenges and opportunities confronting Indigenous peoples, the Hallmark Indigenous Research Initiative (HIRI) embraces Indigenous knowledges and explores these issues in the broadest sense via multidisciplinary collaboration. Building on interdisciplinary research strengths across the University, HIRI works to expand understanding of the challenges and opportunities confronting Indigenous peoples in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.

In November 2019, HIRI hosted a Research Colloquium on Place and Indigenous Cultural Recognition within the University’s built and landscape environments. A RAP3 commitment, the Colloquium promoted critical and scholarly engagement with the University’s institutional history (including our colonial and eugenics history) and our historical relationships with Indigenous Australians.

In 2018, the Indigenous Settler Relations Collaboration (ISRC) was launched. ISRC is a multi-disciplinary research unit working in partnership with Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations in Australia. The ISRC is currently guided by three research priorities: Indigenous Futures, Economic Sovereignty, and Treaty.

In collaboration with University of Melbourne faculties, centres, international scholars and agencies, the Indigenous Studies Unit (ISU) works to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in Research Higher degrees and contributes to an effective evidence base in a range of research areas to improve outcomes in Indigenous health, economic participation, and cultural and resource management.

In 2019, as part of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Curricula Project funded by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the ISU produced classroom resources for Years 3–10 across seven learning areas of the Australian curriculum (English, Mathematics, Science, Humanities and Social Sciences, the Arts, Technologies and Health and Physical Education). This work empowers teachers to integrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into their teaching. These resources provide engaging examples to assist teachers in implementing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority in the classroom.

Read more about the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Curricula Project at: indigenousknowledge.research.unimelb.edu.au

Strengthening Indigenous language research

The Research Unit for Indigenous Language (RUIL) is the first of its kind in Australia. RUIL works with Indigenous communities across Australia and in the surrounding region (including Indonesia and Vanuatu) to expand and strengthen Indigenous language research, and to support efforts of communities to maintain their linguistic and cultural heritage.

RUIL team members Nick Thieberger and Rachel Nordlinger were instrumental in creating the Gurrk display, an artwork featured in the Melbourne Science Gallery exhibition, Blood: attract and repel. ‘Gurrk’ means blood in the Woi Wurrung language of the Wurundjeri people.

In November 2019 the Governor General of Australia, General David Hurley, visited RUIL to discuss the ‘50 Words Project’. This project aims to provide 50 words in every Indigenous language of Australia. This will provide a useful resource for schools and educational organisations to learn 50 words in their local language and for the general public to discover and appreciate the diversity of First Nations’ languages around Australia.


“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been reading the sky for 65,000 years, shaping our country with fire for 65,000 years, and have known for 65,000 years that water is essential to all life. We have designed freely available teacher resources to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander curriculum content in classrooms so it is seen as an integral element of curriculum delivery. In so doing, students – Indigenous and non-Indigenous – will have the opportunity to learn about the sophistication of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and grow up with an understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and cultures.”

Professor Marcia Langton
Director
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Curricula Project
The Research Unit for Indigenous Language is helping give back to communities the languages that are no longer heard on a daily basis. Photo Rachel Nordlinger.
Dedicated centre for Indigenous arts and culture

Launched in 2017, the Research Unit for Indigenous Arts and Cultures (RUIAC) is an initiative of the Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development and the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music. RUIAC is the only dedicated research unit for Indigenous arts and culture in Australia.

Objectives

- Conduct and promote research that produces knowledge about Indigenous arts practices and arts philosophies
- Support and grow Indigenous research and researchers in the arts, through graduate training, research activity and research networks
- Inform and demonstrate world’s best practice in intercultural arts research and arts research training
- Leverage the potential of Indigenous arts knowledge in society through partnerships with community, government, and industry.

Achievements

- Development, launch and roll out of the Indigenous Graduate Researcher Training Program delivering Masters of Fine Arts and PhD (Indigenous Arts and Cultures) programs to Indigenous, Australian and international students (currently eight PhD and three MFA students).
- Research into music sustainability and archives in the Pilbara, the Kimberley, Western Arnhem Land, Victoria, Uganda, South Africa and Canada, funded by three ARC Projects and industry
- Annual Symposium on Indigenous Arts in the Academy bringing artists and scholars from across more than 20 nations internationally, to offer the academy Indigenous philosophies and diplomacies of practice as modes of knowledge through talks, art making, and performance. The third annual Symposium on Indigenous Arts in the Academy was held from 25–28 November 2019 at the Southbank campus.
- Contribution to Faculty and University forums and programs targeting Indigenous inclusion in the academy, including co-founding of the Area Leaders in Indigenous Engagement (ALIES) program.
The Research Unit for Indigenous Language was launched at the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music with a procession of the Bigangga (possum-skin cloak) on the Southbank campus. Photo Jared Kuvent.
On track to close the gap on Indigenous eye health

The Indigenous Eye Health unit (IEH) aims to Close the Gap for Vision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through world-leading research, policy formation, advocacy and implementation. IEH has established an evidence-base and policy framework – The Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision, supported by the Indigenous and mainstream health sectors and government.

In 2008 blindness and impaired vision among Indigenous people were six times the national rate. It is now down to three times the national rate.


Conserving Indigenous cultural heritage

The Grimwade Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation develops Australia’s capacity to conserve our continuing cultural record. Through teaching and learning, research and engagement in cultural materials conservation, the centre enables individuals and communities to explore their past, create identity and community in the present, and access their heritage into the future.

For close to a decade, staff and students at the Grimwade Centre and Gija Elders and artists and staff at the Warmun Art Centre, in Western Australia’s Kimberley region, have been working together to increase knowledge across their two communities. The partnership was forged as a result of the devastating flood that destroyed the Warmun township in March 2011.

Staff and students from the Grimwade Centre worked with Warmun Elders to determine how best to save over 450 wet and mouldy significant objects and artworks from the Warmun Community Collection.

Following the flood, each year Gija Board members, Elders and staff from the Warmun Art Centre visit Melbourne and work with Grimwade Centre staff and students, conducting teaching programs and learning about conservation from a lab-based university perspective.

In turn, Grimwade Centre staff and students visit Warmun where they are taught by Gija Elders about the importance of cultural context and gain an understanding of the significance of Gija knowledge on the country where this knowledge is embedded.

Joining the big data dots on Indigenous health policy

In 2018 Professor Sandra Eades was appointed as Professor at the Centre for Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health and is Associate Dean (Indigenous) in the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences.

Professor Eades has worked on a revised road map to Close the Gap in Indigenous Health. She reports that big data analysis is providing a stark focus for boosting health outcomes for Indigenous Australians, whether it’s mental distress, rates of chronic disease or just getting a birth certificate.

Professor Eades is also leading research into analysing multi-generational data covering the first five years of life for every Indigenous child in Western Australia born between 2000 and 2013. She is currently working with Indigenous-focused population health researchers who tackle the big issues: dementia prevention, youth mental health and wellbeing, child removals, and intergenerational trauma.

We’re gathering and analysing ‘big data’ to better inform health policy to close the substantial health gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

“Aboriginal people are highly resilient given their history, but higher rates of chronic disease and disability are associated with their distress. The only way we can really address the fundamental, multifaceted health issues so many Aboriginal people face is by engaging and partnering with Aboriginal communities.”

Professor Sandra Eades
Associate Dean (Indigenous)
Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
For close to a decade, staff and students at the Grimwade Centre and Gija Elders and artists and staff at the Warmun Art Centre in Western Australia’s Kimberley region, have been working together to increase knowledge across their two communities. Photo supplied.
Providing training for emerging Indigenous leaders

The Melbourne Poche Centre for Indigenous Health provides training and development programs for emerging and established Indigenous leaders in academic, policy, clinical and research roles in Higher Education institutions, government, health delivery and the community sector.

Through a partnership with King’s College London, participants in the Poche Indigenous Fellows Leadership Program complete modules in Melbourne and London.

Indigenous Knowledge Institute launched

At the 2019 Garma Festival, Vice-Chancellor Duncan Maskell launched the Indigenous Knowledge Institute for world-leading Aboriginal knowledge, research and education. Professor Maskell committed the University of Melbourne to invest at least $6 million for world-leading Aboriginal knowledge, research and education.

This investment reflects the University’s strong commitment to engagement with Australian Indigenous communities, and First Nations people internationally.

“’The Institute will preserve and restore Indigenous knowledge and support the wider teaching and understanding of cultures which are the oldest on earth and have for too long been neglected, ignored or forgotten in our universities and society,’ says Professor Maskell.

Speaking at the launch, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous), Professor Shaun Ewen said that “It’s only when Australian Indigenous knowledges, perspectives and experiences are centred at the University of Melbourne can it meaningfully recognise its place and begin to fulfil its aspiration to be a truly great Australian university for the world.”

Profiling leading international Indigenous voices

The Narrm Oration is the University’s annual key address profiling leading Indigenous peoples from across the world in order to enrich our ideas about possible futures for Indigenous Australia.

In 2018, the Narrm Oration was delivered by Niklas Labba, a traditional reindeer herder and Academic Director, Centre for Sámi Studies at University of Tromsø/The Arctic University of Norway. Attended by more than 400 people, Niklas Labba offered precious insights into the fundamental importance of an enshrined First Nations voice and constitutional recognition to the long-term prosperity of Indigenous peoples across the globe.

In his Oration Dr Kimura imparted a progression of 36 years overcoming obstacles to revitalise the Hawaiian language and promote cultural wellbeing. Hawaiian is now used as a medium of education from preschool through high school (P-12) and grounds curriculum content in the Hawaiian philosophy of education. As Dr Kimura states “Our language binds us to who we are. This setting challenges us to live in our language for today’s world. If we cannot live in our language today, how will it survive for the future?”

Dr Kimura is considered the grandfather of Hawaiian language reclamation, and named the first ever imaged black hole ‘Powehi’. Powehi means “the adorned fathomless dark creation” or “embellished dark source of unending creation” and comes from the Kumulipo, an 18th century Hawaiian creation chant.

“To have the privilege of giving a Hawaiian name to the very first scientific confirmation of a black hole is very meaningful to me and my Hawaiian lineage that comes from po.”

The Dungala Kaiela ‘Defining Goulburn Murray’ Oration is an annual event co-hosted by the Kaiela Institute and the University of Melbourne. The orations have rolling themes examining culture, climate change, economics and regional development, legal issues, health and society. The Oration celebrates Aboriginal cultural identity, creates a shared vision for the people of the greater Goulburn Murray region, and builds bridges to promote Aboriginal social and economic development.

In 2018, the tenth annual Dungala Kaiela Oration was delivered by Dr Moana Jackson at the Rumbalara Football Netball Club in Shepparton.

His lecture, At home on country, at home in the world, explored the United Nations drafting of Rights of Indigenous Peoples allowing Indigenous people to determine their own destinies.

In 2019 the Dungala Kaiela Oration was delivered by Yawuru leader Senator Patrick Dodson. Known as ‘the Father of Reconciliation’, Senator Dodson spoke about the successes, failures, disappointments and areas of ongoing need for Indigenous Australians, including in the areas of reconciliation, land, recognition and public policy.

Senator Dodson also shared his vision for the future in the context of national, regional and local level realities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. His long and profound contribution to the question of Indigenous futures and Australian society created an inspiring platform for the Goulburn Murray.
2018 Narrm Oration academic procession, with Narrm Orator Niklas Labba, Academic Director of the Centre for Sámi Studies at the University of Tromsø – Arctic University of Norway. Photo Peter Casamento.
Advancing more equitable and inclusive societies worldwide

Melbourne’s Atlantic Fellows for Social Equity (AFSE) is one of seven globally interconnected Atlantic Fellows programs that collaborate across disciplines and borders to advance fairer, healthier, and more inclusive societies. The Atlantic Institute, based at Oxford, connects these seven programs, building a global community of courageous Fellows who inspire positive change.

Funded through Atlantic Philanthropies, AFSE is an Indigenous-led lifelong, collaborative fellowship program and platform for systemic change. It harnesses timeless Indigenous knowledge, ingenuity, and creativity to bring a unique approach to transformative social change – especially within Indigenous communities.

The Fellows are thinkers and doers with innovative ideas and courage, conviction and capacity to bring lasting improvements to their communities and the world.

On the first day of the 2019 Atlantic Fellows For Social Equity Program, Shane Webster and Penelope Jones prepare to listen to a Welcome to Country and be smoked. Photo Juanita Wheeler.
Challenging the health sector to better serve Indigenous Australians

Participating in the 2019 Atlantic Fellows for Social Equity (AFSE) Program has already made a direct and undeniable impact on Penelope Jones. Were it not for the program, Penelope might still be working to support Indigenous people to “eat well, move more, and stay healthy.” This was the goal of her original social change project. That may sound vital and practical. However, thanks to her Fellows, and her openness, Penelope realised that as a white person she may have a more important role to play.

Penelope now sees her contribution to change differently. She now works on inspiring non-Indigenous people to change the system to make it work better for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. She is focusing on the education of non-Indigenous people, particularly those in the health sector. With one third of the 2019 program to go, Penelope hopes to hone her approach to changemaking.

“My AFSE Fellowship experience has helped me realise that I have the skills and knowledge to make a bigger difference,” says Penny. “Right now I aim to work through my role in government to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flourishing. Influencing the national health system to enable it to better serve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is a major opportunity to close the gap.”

“The Atlantic Fellows for Social Equity program has given me amazing leadership skills and connections and friendships that have been life changing.”

Jody Barney
Inaugural Atlantic Fellow
Increasing overseas experiences

Since identifying International Engagement as one of four Themes in RAP3, Indigenous student participation in overseas experiences has increased. In 2018, 31 Indigenous students undertook international experiences across 14 different countries, with two Indigenous students having experiences in multiple countries.

Recognising funding to be a key barrier for Indigenous student participation in overseas study experiences, Murrup Barak trialled a program of targeted student grants in 2018 provided to three students:

- Juris Doctor – British Columbia CA on exchange ($2000)
- Bachelor of Fine Arts (Acting) – Indonesia on short term study ($2000)
- Master of Fine Arts Dance (Research) – Ohio USA for conference and research ($2000).

“ Earlier this year I applied to attend a politics and international relations course at the University of Cambridge. The program coordinators at the Cambridge Summer Institute advised me that I was successful and offered me a place in the two-week course. This opportunity will allow me to acquire new knowledge, experiences abroad and expand my networks as I aspire to build my career in international relations and international Indigenous affairs.”

Indigenous overseas exchange student

Destination countries for Indigenous students undertaking international experiences in 2018
The art of healing: Australian bush medicine exhibition

Celebrating 65,000 years of Indigenous Australian healing practices through contemporary art, The art of healing: Australian Indigenous bush medicine was on display in the University of Melbourne’s Medical History Museum until March 2019. The exhibition attracted extensive interest from students, staff and the public.

Through contemporary art, and following the premise of Tjukurpa (Dreaming) and Indigenous healing practice – past, present and future – the exhibition presented examples of healing practice and bush medicine from distinct and varied Indigenous communities across Australia. The artworks tell stories of bush medicine from across the country as an introduction to a vast bank of knowledge that precedes and parallels other great healing traditions.

In 2019, 20 works from the exhibition were gifted to King’s College London and on 24 October the exhibition opened at Charité – Universitätsmedizin in Berlin after which it will travel to the University of Toronto.

“Bush medicine has always been with Aboriginal people. It was before, and we will always be making bush medicine. There are all kinds of bush medicine and they grow all over. You’ll find they’re different in each place, and we have these ones that I’ve painted.”

Judith Pungkarta Inkamala
The Aboriginal Flag flies above Ormond College on the University of Melbourne's Parkville campus. Photo Peter Casamento.
In the spirit of bala lili, and recognising the profound contributions of and benefits to the University of Melbourne that our engagement with Indigenous Australians brings, we will continue to deepen relationships with Australia’s First Peoples, respect and increase our understanding of their intellectual traditions, and work in partnership to create new knowledge and a culture of reconciliation for all Australians.

In this way, the University can be a leader in the recognition and advancement of Indigenous knowledge and intellectual traditions, nationally, and on the global stage.
About the artwork (illustrations woven throughout)

Dixon Patten is a proud Yorta Yorta and Gunnai man who has family bloodlines from Dhudhuroa, Gunditjmara, Wiradjuri, Yuin, Wemba Wemba, Barapa Barapa and Monaro. He has worked with the University on its Cultural Awareness Training program and other projects.

“The artwork represents the journey taken by the University of Melbourne, working with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, to develop its Reconciliation Action Plan. The pathway depicts life’s course and the waves represent the ripple effect that the RAP’s Signature Projects will have on students, staff and the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous communities.”

Dixon Patten, artist and designer
Bayila Creative www.bayila.com.au