

QUEENSLAND TOURISM  
INDUSTRY COUNCIL

# Indigenous Tourism Employment Champions Network

CASE STUDIES – EDITION 6, 2014

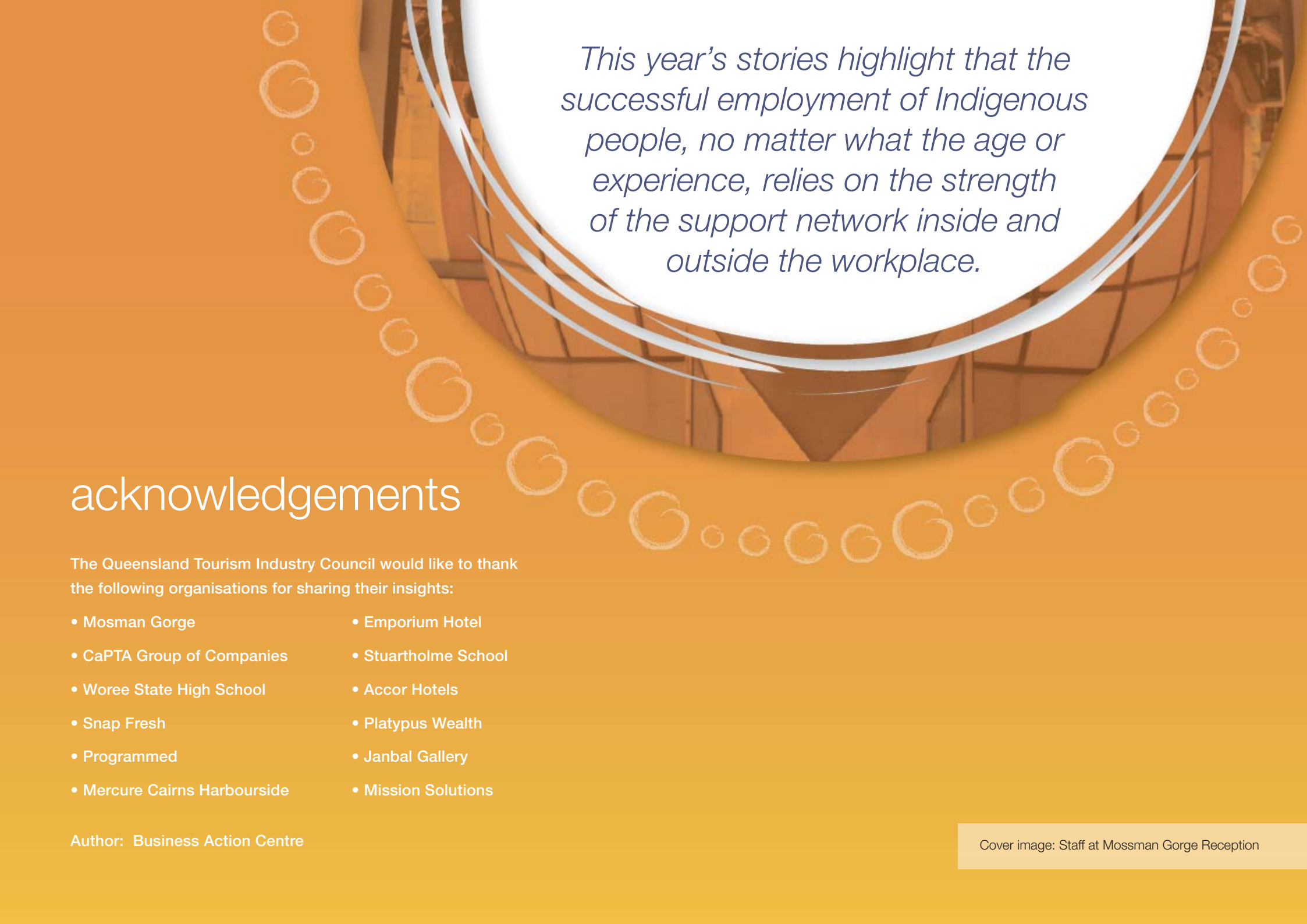


QUEENSLAND  
TOURISM INDUSTRY  
COUNCIL

*The Voice of Tourism*



Queensland  
Government



*This year's stories highlight that the successful employment of Indigenous people, no matter what the age or experience, relies on the strength of the support network inside and outside the workplace.*

## acknowledgements

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council would like to thank the following organisations for sharing their insights:

- Mosman Gorge
- CaPTA Group of Companies
- Woree State High School
- Snap Fresh
- Programmed
- Mercure Cairns Harbourside
- Emporium Hotel
- Stuartholme School
- Accor Hotels
- Platypus Wealth
- Janbal Gallery
- Mission Solutions

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Cover image: Staff at Mossman Gorge Reception

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# Creating the employment pathway – Making it **REAL**

Mossman Gorge and the Mossman Gorge Centre are located approximately eighty kilometres to the north of Cairns in Tropical North Queensland. Both are ideally situated between two reasonably significant urban populations and a major transport link. At the Centre visitors will find a contemporary café, tour desk, locally stocked art gallery and gift shop and four Indigenous guided walks leaving daily from the main centre into a traditional hunting trail within the Daintree Rainforest.

*The entrée to a moving and spiritual Indigenous experience waiting patiently in the rainforest.*

The Kuku Yalanji people are the Indigenous inhabitants of the land and have a history dating back 50,000 years to the earliest human occupation of Australia. They are true rainforest people, living in complete harmony with their environment. It is part of them and they are part of it, a notion that is movingly brought to life during an Indigenous guided walking tour of Mossman Gorge. Their traditional country extends from south of Mossman to Cooktown in the north, and Palmer River in the west.

The Kuku Yalanji culture is built around a deep respect for nature and an intimate knowledge of its cycles.

Their knowledge has been passed down through the generations – with the members of the community having learned all they know from their elders, parents, grandparents, uncles and aunties.

The combination of Indigenous culture and a controlled access management approach to the Gorge has generated a triple win situation for the Kuku Yalanji people, the visitor and the environment.

The Mossman Gorge Training Centre, a residential accredited training facility located adjacent to the main Centre has two key Indigenous Enterprise Based Traineeship Programs which are providing approximately 30 new employment opportunities each year.



Mossman Gorge Waitresses

*“The benefits outweigh the challenges, and this is demonstrated by our commitment to take additional trainees this year.”*

*~Bernadette Reynolds, HR Manager Accor Hotels*

The Training Centre team has established strong partnerships with the local business community to secure up to 17 Traineeship positions every 6 month period. This Program has included Cultural Awareness Training for Host Employers, many which had not previously engaged with the Indigenous community or had in place Indigenous employment programs.

*One of the keys to success is the extensive recruitment process which includes some work experience and an assessment centre before course commencement.*

Trainees will participate in a Two Week intensive Induction program prior to their first shift on the job.

**Port Douglas Hotels committed to the program include:**

1. **Mantra Portsea (The Mantra Group)**
2. **Sheraton Mirage Port Douglas**
3. **Pullman Sea Temple Resort and Spa Port Douglas**
4. **Rendezvous Resort**
5. **QT Resort (Rydges)**
6. **Silky Oaks Lodge**

Another component that contributes to the success of the program is the support to Trainees extended by the management and Mentors of The Mossman Gorge Centre.

1. A week work experience of specific customer skills development
2. One day of training including course material on:
  - History – culture and people (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders)
  - Contemporary issues
  - Overcoming challenges
  - Success strategies

Kim Dorward, Human Resources Manager, describes it best, ‘We speak with all family members to help them understand the requirements of a Trainee at Mossman Gorge. Constructive feedback has provided a real impetus for individuals continuing to strive for excellence. Our mantra is support to succeed, which encourages independence and empowers. We explore strengths, highlight and work them. The combination of this engenders and builds confidence’.

‘The Traineeship Program is beneficial to the local community on several levels. First and foremost this program provides real job opportunities with relevant industry qualifications. After completing the Traineeship we have guaranteed jobs available at Voyages Ayers Rock Resort or some trainees are offered roles with their host employers. This program can set Trainees up for a great career in the Industry. For the local business community, the hotels have always been challenged with high staff turnover and a reliance on Backpacker labour, this Program provides a committed staff member in peak periods and potentially a long term employee. For the domestic and international guests, they enjoy the interaction with Indigenous workers and

gain a very real insight into the culture. It is incredibly rewarding to not only see the Trainees flourish, but also the engagement and dedication from employers in their efforts to help close the employment gap on this local level.’

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) also spoke with Bernadette Reynolds who is the Human Resource Manager of three far north Queensland Accor Hotels including; Cairns Harbour Lights; Pullman Palm Cove Sea Temple Resort and Spa and Pullman Port Douglas Sea Temple Resort and Spa shared her experiences from a trainee workplace placement employer’s perspective.

‘To be honest we have had mixed results with our trainee program. Our international guests really enjoy interacting and connecting with local Indigenous people and embrace their insights in terms of natural attractions, history and culture. As a business we have had the most success when we have been able to retain a ‘base group’ of employees who can work similar shifts and support each other, both inside and outside the Hotel environment.

We have faced challenges when it comes to the relocation (movement away from country) for program participants. The ‘pull’ and ‘safety’ of the community in a number of cases has been a barrier that we have been unable to overcome.

The benefits outweigh the challenges, and this is demonstrated by our commitment to take additional trainees this year.

We see the success of these graduates and it is very satisfying to know that we have helped support such a worthwhile program', she said.

Even though these challenges have emerged, the program boasts seventeen Trainees successfully employed, thus far, in 2014.

In addition to the approximately 30 Indigenous Trainees a year who participate in this program, the Centre itself hosts 6 Yalanji Trainees each year, providing new employment opportunities to enter the workforce. Natalie Chapman, Training and Development Manager coordinates the logistics of the program working closely with senior members of staff such as Roy Gibson, Rachael Hodges and Karen Shaun who continue to build and maintain relationships with the Mossman Gorge Aboriginal Community. This Program is developing the future leading of the Mossman Gorge Centre and with the traineeships open each year, hopes to encourage students to finish high school and apply for the traineeship after graduation.

Advertising material and communication ensures that only people with the right mind – set should apply. An extract from a Traineeships 2014 'flyer' has been reproduced here:

Applications are now open for  
Indigenous people wanting to complete  
a Hospitality Traineeship at Mossman Gorge Centre.

You will gain experience working across several departments,  
with on the job mentoring and support provided.

Applications for trainee positions should have:

- ✓ A strong interest in gaining a career in Hospitality/Tourism
- ✓ Enthusiasm and motivation to succeed
- ✓ Good grooming and presentation
- ✓ Sound literacy and numeracy, including a completed secondary education with good marks or equivalent; or be able to pass an extensive literacy and numeracy test
- ✓ The ability to work in physically demanding roles
- ✓ The ability to work weekends
- ✓ Local knowledge of Mossman Gorge and Indigenous cultures
- ✓ Drive to provide exceptional consumer service

To be successful it is essential that you have  
the passion and commitment to complete a 9 –12 month  
Traineeship in Certificate III in Hospitality/Tourism.

**There are 6 Traineeships available including:  
4 x Hospitality Trainees, 1 x Tourism Trainee and  
1 x Apprentice Chef (Commercial Cookery)**



# A long way from home and in a different world

Shannen is a 17 year old, Indigenous School Based Trainee, completing a Certificate III in Hospitality through the Brisbane based, multi award winning, Emporium Hotel.

She originates from Townsville and now, when not in Brisbane at school, resides on Palm Island, part of a group of tiny islands off the coast of Townsville in far north Queensland.

Shannen's work place can best be described as spectacular and the first truly luxury boutique hotel for the Queensland capital. The hotel is the sole vision of two dedicated property and design-driven Queenslanders, Anthony and Francine John of the Anthony John Group. Together they have conceived, designed, created and delivered a hotel without equal in Queensland.

Built in conjunction with the now pivotal residential and retail precinct, The Emporium Hotel, in Brisbane's Fortitude Valley was erected on a once derelict site. Today it represents the heart of inner city lifestyle, famed for its fusion of residential living, retail, restaurants, bars and the luxurious Hotel which opened in June 2007.

The Emporium Hotel aspires to provide the highest level of sophistication and service in a boutique environment. It is designed to feature 102 luxury guest suites, Cocktail Bar, Belle Époque Patisserie, Roof Top Terrace with sauna and lap pool, Function & Events Centre,

Business Centre, In-Suite Spa Menu and 24 hour Concierge services.


Fleur Scott, Human Resources Manager, has worked closely with Laurence Somerset, Vocational Education & Training Facilitator at Stuartholme School, to support Shannen's achievement of her certification.

Fleur explains how it all happened, 'Stuartholme School and the Emporium Hotel have a long term partnership in regard to placing school based trainees. Shannen was our first Indigenous School Based Trainee. Rather than the traditional format of the school based trainee rotating through all hotel departments, we restructured the traineeship work to Shannen's strengths which was to work in a team environment. Shy at first, she has really come into her own and plays an important role in our 'front of house activities'.

As an organisation we needed to assess what impact this would have had on our operation

Shannen Casters, School based trainee hospitality at Emporium Hotel, Brisbane





in terms of the flexibility and frequency of shifts so to ensure a win for all concerned. In essence this meant a restructure of the Traineeship to suit both Shannen and us. After some early 'learnings' we were collectively able to map an opportunity to give Shannen a broad base of experiences and interaction with both staff and guests'.

Before speaking with Shannen about her experiences at the Emporium Hotel, QTIC wished to understand the impact family, community and the Cape York Scholarship Leaders Program has had on her life.

She is part of an extended family of both her mother's children and her step – father's children. All in all there are six sisters and four brothers. Shannen's family have been extremely supportive and have engendered strong values including the importance of work leading to opportunity and a prosperous future.

Her Mum left school early to look after family members. She then returned to education as a mature student to gain qualifications as a nurse and is currently employed by Centrelink. Mum is her inspiration – whenever motivation starts to wane, her Mum's sacrifice always helps to refocus energy. She believes the Scholarship Program helps spread Indigenous culture into the city and gives people the opportunity to learn and the will to succeed in a different environment.

Shannen attends Year 12 at Stuartholme School and lives on campus as a boarder.

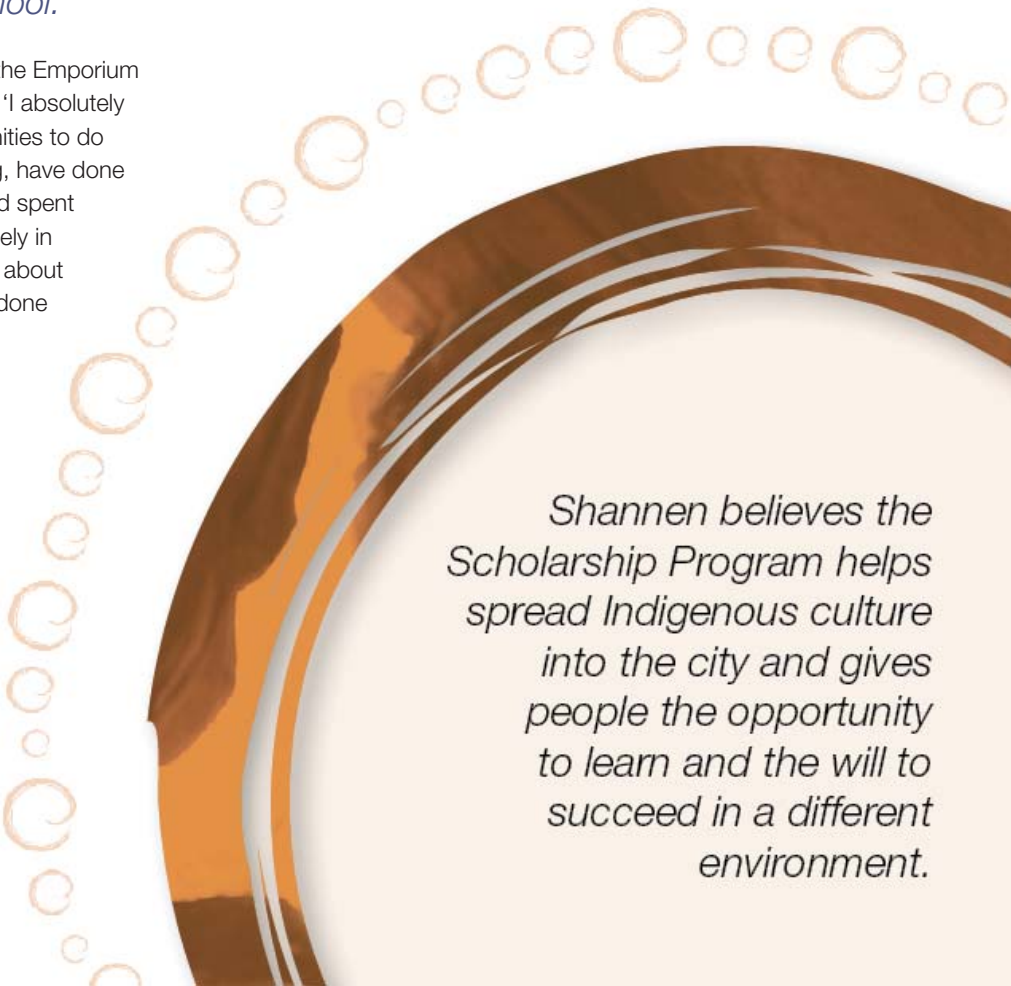
*This year she accepted a leadership role as Captain of the Boarding House and is on 'track' to be the first Palm Island graduate from the school.*

When asked what it was like to work at the Emporium Hotel, Shannen responded emphatically, 'I absolutely love it. I have been given lots of opportunities to do different things. I started in housekeeping, have done some work in communication, events and spent some time in the Patisserie. I felt a bit lonely in Housekeeping, I really like the social part about working in the other areas – I have even done some Barista training and my coffee is definitely getting better!

I have had a lot of support from my work colleagues, especially; Katrina York (Food & Beverage Manager) and Sophie Oddo who is my friend and team leader. Without their support, and everybody else in my life, I would find it difficult'.

QTIC asked Shannen what her aspirations for the future were and she replied, 'My work experience at the Emporium Hotel has really made me want to stay in hospitality and

tourism. I like that tourism is multi - cultural, just like Stuartholme School. I am interested in attending Bond University to further my studies and my ideal job would be with Qantas Airways'.



*Shannen believes the Scholarship Program helps spread Indigenous culture into the city and gives people the opportunity to learn and the will to succeed in a different environment.*



# Getting them while their young

A Traineeship Program partnership expertly managed and integrated from three committed organisations with dedicated people leaders.

## **PLAYER 1.**

Beacon Foundation  
(Anita Cannon - Queensland State Manager)

## **PLAYER 2.**

Woree State High School  
(Desley Ferrando – Vocational Education Coordination)

## **PLAYER 3.**

CaPTA Group of Companies  
(Penny Cleland – Staff Development Manager)

## **BEACON FOUNDATION**

### **A Community Approach to Tackling Youth Unemployment**

The Beacon Foundation (Beacon) has an established track record of helping inspire and motivate students to either stay in school and increase their educational engagement and attainment or choose a positive pathway that enables successful transition to employment, further education or training.

Beacon, a national non-profit organisation working in more than 115 secondary schools across all Australian states and territories in 2013, believes every young Australian can develop an independent will to achieve personal success for themselves and their community.

Beacon's programs support young people to develop this focus through engaging and influencing the attitudes and behaviour of the broader community. By harnessing community involvement, it works within schools to ensure young people are either earning or learning at vulnerable transition points in their lives.

Established 25 years ago with the initial No Dole program in Tasmania, Beacon focuses on students who are "falling between the cracks", typically from low socio economic status

(Low SES) schools, by engaging the student in practical, solution focused programs that mobilise the school, parents and businesses in the community to create positive opportunities and knowledge for skills development.

Beacon has had an impact on over 110,000 young people in more than 240 schools in communities in every Australian state and territory. This includes over 13,000 young people in around 115 schools currently completing the program in 2013.

## **WOREE STATE HIGH SCHOOL**

Woree State High School is a 700 on campus and 100 off campus pupil strong educational institution that was established in 1985 and has a proven history of being a strong all round performer. The school is proud of their; academic standards, modern curriculum, cultural richness, professional teaching, innovative practices, sporting champions, and creative brilliance, all within a disciplined and caring environment.

Woree State High School is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) currently registered to deliver the following qualifications:

- CPC10111 - Certificate I in Construction
- BSB10112 – Certificate 1 in Business
- BSB20112 - Certificate II in Business
- MEM10105 - Certificate I in Engineering
- LMF10108 - Certificate I in Furnishing
- SIT20213 - Certificate II in Hospitality
- ICA20111 - Certificate II in Information, Digital Media and Technology
- SIT20112 - Certificate II in Tourism

All courses are delivered by qualified staff awarded a TAE40110 Certificate IV in Training and Assessing, and who possess current industry skills.

## SCHOOL TO WORK OPPORTUNITIES

Work experience or structured workplace learning is offered widely to students in years 10, 11 and 12 at the Woree and SchoolTech campuses. This regularly results in students being offered an opportunity for a School-based Apprenticeship or Traineeship (SAT).

School-based Apprenticeships or Traineeships are available to students at either the Woree State High School or SchoolTech campuses. All School-based Apprentices or Trainees must continue to meet the requirements of the school code of behaviour and strive for continual improvement in education. This is achieved through regular

mentoring and support from all staff.

Woree reminds workplace students the similarities between school and workplace readiness:

- People of different ethnic/cultural backgrounds
- Punctuality and attendance required
- Meeting deadlines
- Good behaviour
- Following safety procedures
- Good attitude required
- Organisational skills

Woree State High School is a multi-award winning institution and one of thirty one Beacon Foundation supported schools in Queensland.



Pictured: Phyllis with her support staff at Raintree Shopping Centre Café – Desley Ferrando, Vocational Education Coordinator (Woree State High School); Tanya Vandermaat, Owner (Raintree Plaza Café); Phyllis Mado, school based trainee (hospitality); Todd Darragh, Training Coordinator – FNQ (Club Training Australia).

## CAPTA GROUP OF COMPANIES

The CaPTA Group operates highly successful tourist operations in and around Cairns and Port Douglas in Far North Queensland, Australia. Locally owned and operated by the Woodward Family of Cairns, the name represents the acronym Cairns and Port Trips & Attractions, or more informally, Charlie and Pip's Trips & Attractions.

The CaPTA Group consists of the following companies:

1. Rainforestation Nature Park
2. Tropic Wings Cairns Tours
3. Wildlife Habitat
4. Cairns Wildlife Dome
5. Jungle Tours
6. Australian Butterfly Sanctuary
7. Careers Training Centre
8. Cairns ZOOM
9. RnR Rafting

Each company within The CaPTA Group operates as its own identity; however, they are unified by the underpinning principles of the CaPTA Culture. It is the desire of Charles and Pip Woodward to ensure that all staff understand the importance of their role within the business to deliver the best quality service to both fellow employees and clients.

*The relationship between the three organisations is a collaboration and coordination of three separate components, however interlinked under the banner of 'support.'*

The Beacon Foundation in partnership with Woree State High School and 'Community' identify suitable individuals. Woree State High School provide 'in house' vocational training and the CaPTA Group of Companies and other local businesses provide workplace placements.

Sounds complicated, not at all, the Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) has witnessed the relationship first hand – seamless and embraced by students, community, school and employers alike and most importantly underpinned by dedicated people representing the three organisations involved.

Desley Ferrando is the 'lynch pin'. Surprisingly, not a teacher by profession, she is a well-credentialed business woman who 'earned her stripes' in the ultra-competitive, 'hard-nosed' sugar cane industry. Desley's ability to understand and appreciate trainee placement from the employers' perspective is a critical contributor to the overall program's success.

*Her passion and commitment to the role is clearly evident.*

QTIC also had the pleasure of a one on one chat with Woree State High School Year 12 student, Phyllis Mado who is a past Beacon Student Ambassador and completing a school based Certificate II Hospitality traineeship at Raintree Shopping Centre Café, Cairns.

Phyllis, with the widest of smiles, shared her experiences, 'I am from a large family, so it is hard for me to juggle family and school commitments. I need to manage my time carefully and make sure I do not let anybody down. Woree

(State High School) and my work at Raintree Shopping Centre Café has taught me about respect, tolerance and how to get along with others. When I first started my work placement I had challenges with my confidence... now I love chatting with the customers, especially our older 'regulars.' Some of the things that helped me the most was the 'mock' interviews we practiced before going out into the workplace and the mentoring, especially from Tania my boss, I have received'.





# North of here

The Mercure – Cairns – Harbourside is a 173 room four star Hotel and is part of the Accor Group, one of the world's leading hotel operators and a market leader in Europe.

Accor is present in 92 countries with more than 3,500 hotels and 450,000 rooms.

With more than 160,000 employees in the Accor brand hotels worldwide, the Group offers to its clients and partners nearly 45 years of know-how and expertise.

The Accor Group has a portfolio of strong brands and provides a wide offering to suit all guests – from luxury to economy - that are recognised and awarded around the world for their service quality;

- **Sofitel**
- **Pullman**
- **MGallery**
- **Novotel**
- **Suite Novotel**
- **Mercure**
- **Ibis**
- **Ibis Styles**

QTIC, having worked and met regularly with Mercure Cairns Harbourside management, understand that innovation and doing things that little bit differently are high on the Hotel's priority list.

*Winner – Accor  
National Innovation Award*


Hence the birth of the Cape York Visitor Information Centre – the first ever Information Centre to represent and profile the 'Cape'. The brainchild of Mercure's, Sales and Marketing Manager, David Penney and supported by Cape York Sustainable Futures CEO, Trish Butler, Tourism Cape York and tourism operators, the facility was opened in October 2013.

David explains, 'The Hotel set about working alongside Cape York Sustainable Futures to set up a Corporate Partnership with Mercure Cairns Harbourside.

'Our vision in terms of the Tourism Cape York Visitor Information Centre (TCYVIC) has the potential to grow domestic and international visitation to Mercure Cairns Harbourside through pre and post Adventure Itineraries. Coupled with the leisure component of hosting the TCYVIC, Mercure Cairns Harbourside has already played host to a number of corporate and government delegations that support Tourism Cape York (TCY) and its affiliates.'



David Penney, Director of Sales & Marketing & Annick Dubois, Assistant Manager  
Mercure Harbourside, Cape York Information Centre



He continues, 'We have located the TCYVIC alongside the Reception Desk and it is a positive addition to the Hotel's lobby area. The 'Centre' boasts stunning imagery of the Cape York Peninsular, as well as brochure material featuring TCY members.'

'We have coordinated training programs for Front of House team members concentrating on increasing product knowledge and ensuring that staff provide the information that guests really want.'


Front of House team members now have the ability to act as an ambassador for the Cape York region. Training includes known and little known facts on the 'Cape', what experiences visitors to the region can expect and of course, information on the tourism operators and how to book tours, attractions and accommodation services.'

From a Cape York Sustainable Futures perspective, Trish Butler said, 'The organisation was excited to be involved with the Centre, which we hope will provide a simple yet very effective way to help drive tourism and awareness for what is undeniably one of Australia's most beautiful, yet remote and undiscovered regions. It is an exciting time for Cape York, with many fresh marketing campaigns currently in planning and progress, not least of all future inclusion in Tropical Tourism North Queensland's (TTNQ) Drive North app. and a rebrand in partnership with TTNQ of the next RACQ map to better promote the Epic Cape York Drive'.

Not only does the Hotel support Indigenous people through the promotion of Cape York, 'Mercure Cairns Harbourside' is involved in a number of other initiatives, including:

1. **Local Indigenous Employment Strategies**
2. **Sponsorship of Local Indigenous Events**
3. **Partnership with fellow Reconciliation Supporters**
4. **Indigenous Artists in Residence**
5. **Feature Reconciliation Windows and Activities**
6. **Harmony Day Activities**

Paul Morton, General Manager of the Hotel reflects, 'Accor's commitment to a diverse workplace has seen the overall Indigenous employment percentage at this hotel climb to twenty five per cent. Whilst this may have started as a deliberate Indigenous based strategy, it has now grown organically to such levels & quite simply it is a realisation that we only employ the best people for the job'.



*'We have coordinated training programs for Front of House team members concentrating on increasing product knowledge and ensuring that staff provide the information that guests really want.'*



# Mentors and Micro Businesses

Mentoring in the business context affects all levels of the business and creates an environment where people feel valued. The business owner, who in micro businesses makes the major decisions is the person who should seek the benefits of effective mentoring first. They in turn, are the people who can pass their accumulated wisdom onto the other people in the business to ensure that everyone moves forward.

**Mentoring is particularly important in the following areas:**

1. **The vision of the business**
2. **Emotional engagement**
3. **Business planning and goal setting**
4. **Continuous improvement** – building the business

It is easy to create and have an inclusive management style when times are good and all is going to plan. It becomes more difficult when business is tough. Taking time to have regular staff meetings, time spent talking to staff and generally getting to know your employees is an easy option to ignore when you are struggling with other parts of your business. Maintaining a consistent management plan re-enforces the behaviours and expectations you would like to achieve in having a sustainable workplace culture.

## THE VISION OF THE BUSINESS

What does it look like when my business is really successful? How do I feel, how do my customers, suppliers, staff and all other stakeholders feel when the business is really successful? The Vision should be inspirational and carry the owner/s and everyone forward. To do this it has to be constructed in such a way that it inspires people. It then needs to be communicated to everyone in a manner that all are inspired. How you conduct and manage your business is a reflection of your beliefs and values...

## EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

The key to inspiration and business success is having everyone linking their own future hopes and dreams with the future of the business in some positive way. For this to happen, the direct contribution of each stakeholder needs to be specified in such a way that it is obvious that they are making an important contribution to the success of the business. This helps them to become

emotionally attached or emotionally engaged with the direction and success of the business. When people are emotionally engaged, it releases enormous energy which can be used to create real productivity.

*When there is real productivity, there needs to be a clear direction to maximise the benefit of the effort.*



Photo courtesy of [www.ingimage.com](http://www.ingimage.com)



*Fairness relies on being clear about the business values and expectations, communicating these standards and behaviours and consistently applying them.*

Staff need to provide feedback to owners on how effectively they are fulfilling their role and meeting customer's expectations. It is not always easy, as an owner of a micro business, to know how we come across to others and feedback gives the framework to make change possible. Clear job roles for all, regular meetings and reviews with employees (be they family members), feedback from all your stakeholders helps create an opportunity for you to manage behaviours and provide a forum for employees to have a voice.

*Providing your employees with opportunities to express their views is essential.*

For each business this will change with the 'make up' of the staff and nature of the business. How you do this will vary, however it can be as simple as stopping to have lunch with employees, coffee when it is quiet or a weekly/monthly staff meeting.

All employees should have opportunities to have their say; owners need to find ways of reaching and encouraging people to talk about what's important to them rather than waiting for people to come to them; owners need to listen to what is said and respond to it.

This doesn't mean acting on all suggestions but it does mean letting people know what the process is and the thoughts behind the decision. It means allowing people to see and understand what is going on and not just responding to decisions.

## **BUSINESS PLANNING AND GOAL SETTING**

Mentoring is where planning and goal setting becomes imperative. The vision gives the inspiration, business planning and goal setting gives the direction and framework for the implementation of the vision. Goals are achieved through the formulation of clearly defined and measurable strategies. Specific actions to achieve the strategies that meet the goals are then determined. The more this is shared with stakeholders, the more likely they are to be actively engaged in achieving the goals.

Set your policy and procedures that show you have a fair and transparent ownership style. Clear and easily read documents that allow all employees to understand what it is that you expect from them and what it is that you are doing for them. This can be accomplished in their letter of appointment for wages and their job description as well as regular staff meetings and reviews. Remind employees of what the vision is and how the business will achieve that vision.

## **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT – BUILDING THE BUSINESS**

Continuous improvement is built on the principles of clear leadership, a strong expectation of success, involving everybody, having good quality information, and getting things right the first time. This requires the vision to be clear and current and the Business Plan to be based on good quality information, well - constructed, measurable and owned by the stakeholders. It also incorporates a style of thinking which anticipates and solves problems and uses innovative approaches to exploit new opportunities.

*Continuous Improvement builds on momentum. When the momentum is understood and managed, the business continues to improve, when the momentum falters, so does the business.*

As an owner do you 'walk the talk'? We all have seen and heard of people who make promises or promise to follow through. Are you one of them? Do you say one thing and do the opposite. This means that employees are given different messages, one written and one demonstrated daily. The way we behave sends an important message and employees will use this behaviour as a role model. Good management is not about being nicer to people, it's about being fair

and consistent. Fairness relies on being clear about the business values and expectations, communicating these standards and behaviours and consistently applying them.

Treating people fairly means communicating what it is you expect, communicating issues that impact on them and letting them know what to expect and when. You may not have all the answers but communication of the issues and problems allows them to understand the process the business is going through and why decisions are made. You don't need a vote to make a decision in your business but you do need your employees to be part of the solution so gaining their commitment is critical to your success. When people understand the process they may not agree but they do feel they have had an opportunity to be part of the decision process.

From a macro business perspective mentoring can help 'fill the gap.' Often business owners do not have every intricate skill required to manage every facet of the businesses successfully – very few do, not even the CEO's of large corporations.

### *This is the Situation when mentors can be invaluable.*

Mentoring has the capacity to elevate, 'cottage industries' sold at market places to sustainable mainstream businesses. Often people in micro businesses are 'hell bent' spending all their time working

in the business, when often it is more productive to 'sit back' with the guidance of a mentor and work on the business. The Mentoring support does not need to be time consuming, arduous or expensive. A time block of two hours a month, with a clearly defined Action Plan can see significant results in a six month window.

QTIC suggests that all current and potential Indigenous and non - Indigenous business owners of macro enterprises consider the regular use of Mentoring – you do not know where it will lead to...

photo courtesy of [www.ingimage.com](http://www.ingimage.com)





# Harmonious Inside & Out

A venture onto the factory floor of Snap Fresh opens up a world of cultural diversity and more importantly a world of individual and workplace harmony.

Snap Fresh, established in 2001, is a one hundred per cent owned subsidiary of Qantas Airlines Australia. The company provides in – flight meals for Qantas across Australia, combined with major organisations including defense and health services. The factory has the capacity to produce twenty million meals per annum in a number of packaging formats tailored to suit customer requirements.

*Snap Fresh – is a world class frozen meal manufacturing facility.*

Located in Logan City, some thirty five minutes' drive from Brisbane International Airport and, Snap Fresh is positioned in one of the most culturally diverse municipality's in the nation. An area that has been known to experience cultural tension, the city has made significant in-roads to reestablish community unity and spirit. Equally a number of local companies have done exactly the same.

Snap Fresh are absolute leaders in this field. Recently the Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) spent three hours immersed in the company culture and experienced a myriad of genuine interaction with both staff and management.

*Wow, what an uplifting experience, a real smile on every multi-cultural face.*

Debbie Lanham, Senior Consultant, Human Resources and Tania Macfarlan, State Manager, Programmed (Recruitment Agency) begin the story of a business to business partnership and the journey undertaken to create a harmonious and hierarchical free work environment.

Our conversation commences with the best practice process of 'laying a solid foundation', ensuring no corners are cut, and this continues to literally and metaphorically be reinforced and reshaped when required.



Pictured: The hard working team at Snap Fresh.  
Far left: Debbie Lanham, Senior Consultant Human Resources, Snap Fresh/QTIC Indigenous Employment Champion, SnapFresh team  
Far right: Tania Macfarlan (State Manager – Queensland)



*Snap Fresh has been able to achieve a workforce and workplace harmony that is the envy of any organisation.*

By all accounts this three year jointly shared vision was the catalyst for a significant business culture change at Snap Fresh.

In 2007, the organisation of some 130 to 150 full – time and between 30 to 100 casual labour hire staff had no permanent Indigenous representation whatsoever. In 2014 the company now boasts greater than four per cent Indigenous long term, full-time employees and Programmed casuals, who are an integral part of the diverse workplace.

Debbie Lanham reflects, 'In 2008 we, with the assistance from a State Government Representative for Indigenous Employment began implementing Cultural Awareness Training and with the support from staff, Snap Fresh started celebrating Harmony Day. The company showed how important this event was by modifying factory shifts on the day, inviting family and friends, inviting local business representatives and having the day endorsed by local Elder – Auntie Robyn. It has transformed Snap Fresh. All cultures are represented and the day is spent learning the intricacies of others cultures through dance, music and story – telling'.

*Snap Fresh – we are an employer of choice (because we understand the diversity of culture).*

Tania continues the explanation, 'The cultural transformation has been a long and measured process. Potential employees are identified by 'Programmed'

and started as casuals to ensure the correct fit between individual and company values. Everyone is partnered with an identified and personality matched 'support buddy' and commence their Snap Fresh pathway on the 'Assembly Line'. Both Deb and I have realised and learnt that one Recruitment Model does not fit all. We continually 'tweak' and reassess our processes. Lynda Burfield is the company's Frontline Champion for Indigenous and School based Traineeships and together with workplace support buddies, play a big part in the outcomes'.

Snap Fresh has been able to achieve a workforce and workplace harmony that is the envy of any organisation. Respect underpins all relationships whether employee to employee or employee to manager. The support network ensures no individual is isolated.

A collective discussion with the Indigenous employees pictured above, clearly reinforced what Debbie and Tania had to say. The group agreed that Snap Fresh had made a significantly positive impact on their lives – some even went on to say, life changing; that the work equation was an easy one – what you put in, you get out and they all felt a valued part of the Snap Fresh family.

Debbie's concluding words were,

*'Imbedding the program in the company structure needs to occur as this will ensure longevity and continued success'*



# Nothing gets in the way of sharing Aboriginal culture

Meet Brian (Binna) Swindley, who is the artist in residence and co-owner of Janbal Art Gallery, which is located in the far northern Queensland town of Mossman, around one hour's drive north from Cairns.

Janbal in Kuku Yalanji (tribal) language means Quandong – a sweet, edible bush fruit.

The Gallery, a transformation of his family home, has been in operation for six years and provides visitors and locals more than a place to view spectacular art work.

It is a true Aboriginal experience, all can come and learn about Aboriginal Art and share Aboriginal culture through hands - on painting and storytelling experiences. Hands on painting opportunities include:

1. **Private art classes**
2. **Boomerang painting workshops**
3. **A4 canvas painting workshops**
4. **Group workshops**

Binna has a severe hearing disability (however, lip reads well), and does not let this interfere with his passion and ability to share his Aboriginal culture, dreamtime stories and visual interpretations.

Art and business runs thickly through generations (Uncles and Aunts) and the veins of Binna's immediate family, with mother Shirley (Janbal) Swindley being the art inspiration and the mentor. In conversation he fondly remembers as a child coming home from school and helping her with painting canvas backgrounds and just as importantly, his father's teaching of a strong respect for money and the rewards for working hard.

*This reflection moves our chat into Binna sharing his story and journey thus far...*

'I was born in Cooktown (at the time, an isolated coastal town approximately 260km north), but raised, from the age of five, in what I consider my hometown of Mossman. Mum and Dad made the move to Mossman so I could commence school and we could all be closer to larger communities. I was schooled locally until the end of Year Seven and then commenced my secondary education in Cairns. In Years 11 and 12, I prepared for life after school by studying business, art and Aboriginal culture. I did fairly well and after what seemed an eternity, I was accepted into a Cairns Technical and Further Education (TAFE) course to study art,' he said.



Binna at Janbal Gallery, Mossman



*Binna is quick to explain that the success of Janbal Gallery has been a collective effort and everybody's contribution is as important as the artwork.*

*Not once during this exchange did Binna refer to any hardships caused by his hearing disability.*

Binna continues, 'After graduating from TAFE I did a number of different things before opening the Janbal Gallery with my business partner Mary. The first four and half years were spent teaching art and the next eleven, well almost, were as a Ranger with Queensland Parks and Wildlife. My final years were spent at the Daintree Eco Lodge working with Terry and Cathy Maloney assisting with maintenance and teaching art classes,' he concluded.

As with a number of Indigenous people the death of his father and mother in the years' 2000 and 2002 respectively were extremely challenging and difficult to come to terms with, however in Binna's case these events were the catalyst for the establishment of the gallery in the renovated family home, that still houses both he and his brother.

Binna is quick to explain that the success of Janbal Gallery has been a collective effort and everybody's contribution is as important as the artwork. As mentioned earlier, Mary Williams is the co – owner and is responsible for financial administration. Andrew Simpson is a mentor with the Indigenous Tourism Champions Program, a national collaborative between Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) and Tourism Australia and he assists with formal communications, marketing and business development. The local

Woolworths advertises the gallery's location and features artwork signage in the fruit and vegetable section – the first such partnership between Indigenous artists and the multi - national food chain giant. He is also involved with cross promotional activities with the well - established 'Walker Brothers Tours' company and was commissioned to provide the door prize at the highly successful Australian Tourism Exchange event in Cairns in May 2014.

*'Art helps build community and is also about developing direct business opportunities,' he said.*

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) asked Binna what are some of the business challenges he faces due to his hearing impediment – and this was his response...

'Firstly, I need to conduct as much communication as possible in a face to face environment. Secondly, I do not answer the telephone – the message requests that all information, initially, be relayed by text and email – this helps me keep an audit trail. I make it clear that I am a competent lip reader and do not communicate via sign language. Finally sometimes I have difficulty modulating my voice and people sometimes misinterpret this,' he said.

In conclusion we spoke about the future, and 'wow', does he have a business and community vision! It includes, but is not limited by the following;

- Indigenous welcome signage to the region
- Gallery Coffee Shop
- Extended (under cover) workshop facilities
- The Gallery becomes a recognised 'meeting place' for local Indigenous youth to interact with regional visitors and learn artistic techniques including the screen printing and linoleum painting of Binna's design.

And, if he was not busy enough already, the establishment of Traineeships for locals post Year 12.

QTIC wishes Binna every success in his future endeavours.





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