

CONNECTION · COLLABORATION
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OUR MOB.. OUR STORIES

OUR VOICES



ACT
Government
Education

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Education and Training Directorate acknowledges the Ngunnawal and the Wreck Bay peoples as the custodians of the lands on which our schools are located. We respect their continuing cultures and the unique contribution they make to the life of these regions and lands. We also acknowledge and respect that the Canberra region was, and still is, an important meeting place that is significant to many other Aboriginal peoples and we extend that respect to the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who now call the Canberra region home.

Artwork artist Leah Brideson

This artwork reflects the ACT Education and Training Directorate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Action Plan through an interconnection of the self and support systems in education (central circles) and the four key concepts; Connection, Collaboration, Careers and Leadership (in blue). This interconnection represents reciprocal learning that strengthens two way relationships and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

The pathways running through the circles illustrate the many journeys, choices and opportunities throughout the education community, whilst maintaining a strong connection with identity and Country.



**Leah Brideson, Artist and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Worker,
October 2013**

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OUR MOB, OUR STORIES

OUR VOICES

Our Voices tells the story of seven Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed across the ACT Education and Training Directorate. Teachers, school leaders, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Workers and administrative support staff have shared their journeys, their passion for education, hopes for the future and what were their influences in joining the education community.

The overarching idea of helping our people sustains me, I've had opportunities and I feel a responsibility to help others. Cara-Jane Shipp, Executive Teacher

Increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and providing career pathways and leadership opportunities in schools and central office, in support roles, as classroom teachers and school leaders is a priority of the Directorate.

I want to be an interesting and motivational teacher, being myself and not changing who I am. Jorge Kapeen, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Worker

We want all students, families and communities actively engaged in life-long learning, connected and belonging. We bring our histories, identities, perspectives and cultures to education – this builds rich, thriving, culturally supportive and safe learning communities and workplaces.

I can be a positive role model and show students that there is not just one path if you are Aboriginal but lots of opportunities. Patrick Chapman, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Aspirations Coordinator

By sharing the many journeys of staff through their voices, we hope to bring to life the day to day hopes, challenges and passions that sustain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff working in the ACT Education and Training Directorate.

This is just the beginning we have many more stories to share and tell.



LEAH BRIDESON

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Worker – Primary School *(previously known as Indigenous Education Worker – IEW)*

I've always wanted to be a teacher. I had some great teachers who knew their stuff, they approached Aboriginal history in a way that spoke to me and I was able to share my knowledge too. I had a really supportive Aboriginal worker too and I wanted to do what she did with kids in the community. It was always fun, we were proud; she helped us continue to be proud of who we are.

I'd been looking out for ways to get into the primary school sector, my Mum showed me the ad for an Indigenous Education Worker and I was like "This would be deadly!", as I wanted to be like the Aboriginal worker I had had in primary school.

I particularly want to teach kids to be respectful of their Elders and the land - and that's kids across the board. I want to teach them to be a respectful people and show them pathways that they can take. Seeing the kids so proud of who they are and sharing their cultures and stories with other kids, that's special.

Working in schools where there were no Aboriginal perspectives made me want to be a teacher and change things around. I want to help teachers celebrate culture and not be scared.

When I finish my teaching degree and have taught for a couple of years, I want to go back to uni and get my arts degree to become an art teacher and specialise in Indigenous art. Each step I do at uni is one step closer to my dream, it's just putting the effort in and the time will come.



DAN GREENE

Preschool to Year 10 School - Literacy and Numeracy Teacher Years 6-10

I appreciated the teachers I had growing up, being the only child of a single parent, having teachers as role models and the connection through school was valuable. I want to be able to provide that for other kids. I had confidence in myself to be successful in the classroom. Coming from the NT and seeing a lot of talented Aboriginal kids not making it through to year 12, it is great to be part of a system that makes an attempt to support Aboriginal students all the way through. I am passionate about Aboriginal students succeeding and pursuing the broad range of opportunities available to them in the ACT.

I have been teaching in the ACT for eleven years. I've had many roles in education from classroom teacher, guest university lecturer, Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy Consultant to a recruitment role with Human Resources to encourage teachers to work in Canberra. I currently work with students who are disengaged, both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal and also provide a mentoring role. I enjoy being part of a multi-disciplinary team, I still get to be a teacher but I'm able to support students in a broader range of capacities.

I want to be content that I have done everything I can to achieve the best outcomes for our kids and system. I love working with children and young people and supporting the next generation of Aboriginal students in schools. I'm passionate about high expectations; young people will rise to the bar set for them, provided they are given the right scaffolding.



CORRINE SHARMAN

IT support and Centre Management Section , Headley Beare Centre for Teaching and Learning

I want to be part of kids getting better opportunities and the help they actually need. I see students struggling and I want to be part of the change so that they feel positive coming to school every day. I want them to know that there are people out there that can help them reach their potential. It's all about the kids for me – that's what we do.

I started as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Trainee through an ACT Government initiative in 2012. Throughout the training I worked with the Executive Director Learning, Teaching and Student Engagement team, supporting the work of that area. I supported the Senior Policy Advisor on an administrative level. I am now a permanent officer in the Business Division Unit with the Centre Management Section as well as managing the IT support at the Headley Beare Centre for Teaching and Learning. It's a diverse role and I have to respond daily to what is happening in the centre.

I'd like to work with students in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Section. I'd like to be out with students face to face. I'm studying my CERT IV in Alcohol and others Drugs (Community Development) and I want to be able to use these skills to help kids move past life issues they feel are holding them back and see the opportunities available.



CARA-JANE SHIPP

High School Executive Teacher– English, History, Geography and Indigenous Programs - implementing Australian Curriculum in all these areas and running specific programs

I decided I wanted to be a teacher when I was about 7; I loved the teacher that I had. My Dad is passionate about education empowering Indigenous people and this has had a big influence on me. I feel a sense of responsibility to give back to the community as I have been given many opportunities.

I trained to be a high school teacher (English and History) and have been teaching for 8 years. I've always had roles to do with Indigenous education and supporting teachers to incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in the curriculum, as well as being involved in raising cultural awareness.

One of my strengths is working with kids with low literacy levels. I have always had a strong literacy focus, often it is poor literacy that leads kids to disengage; they can't understand what is going on and can't access the curriculum. When you see kids open up and allow you to teach them and move forward that is exciting. You really need to build trust to be able to teach – when I see that it keeps me going.

I'm happy to stay at the Executive Teacher level, I still get to teach but also have influence working with other teachers, embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and working with Indigenous kids and families.

The overarching idea of helping our people sustains me, and in the end it's all about the kids because they are our future.



JORGE KAPEEN

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Worker – Primary School (previously known as Indigenous Education Worker – IEW)

I mainly support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students but as you build relationships throughout the school, you help everyone. It doesn't matter what background kids are, if they relate to you and you build a connection to them you can help them. That breaks down perceptions of people and builds a positive image of us. We work here together as a team, there are no perceived thoughts about each other, and I think that is why we are successful here.

I try to watch teachers as much as I can, to use their qualities when I finish my teaching qualification. I'm surrounded by some pretty experienced teachers here and role models, so I can soak up their knowledge and practices.

I think because of my experience I wanted to make sure that kids like me were understood and not forgotten. My biggest motivation is seeing the confidence grow in our kids, seeing the change in kids from thinking "I can't" to "I can" and knowing you had a role in that; it's really satisfying. Through education you can change anything.

I want to be in my own classroom in a primary school. I want to be someone who makes kids want to learn, I want to be an interesting and motivational teacher, being myself and not changing who I am. Education is a stepping stone for a better future for everyone, that's why I like being in education.



VICKI LUCAS

Deputy Principal, Early Childhood School

I was determined to go to uni. I had a big cousin who was the first in our family to get to uni and I wanted to as well. I almost did a semester of Landscape Architecture at the University of Canberra. I hated it! I'd always been told that I was like an Auntie on the other side of the family who was a teacher, so I thought I would give it a shot. I chose to do early childhood as I wanted to be at the beginning of the story in a child's education; I wanted to be creating possibilities.

I chose to come to uni in Canberra as I had family ties here and it wasn't a big city like Sydney or Melbourne. What I love about our Directorate is that it is so small; it's close enough to be safe. Next year (2014) will be my 20th year with the Directorate. I've taught in preschools, primary schools, Koori Preschool, in the recruitment area, been a Manager of programs and a section and now a Deputy Principal.

I like creating solutions and coming up with options and choices – getting it all to work. Getting it right for one family not just the student but the whole family keeps me going. Relationships matter and I love the family interactions that are part of being in a school.

I work in the same system that is educating my own children, so I have to make sure that I am doing the best that I can, as that is what I expect for my kids. I have to look at what I am doing - unless you are part of the solution you are just part of the problem.



PATRICK CHAPMAN

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Aspirations Coordinator

I loved seeing and meeting with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Officer when I was in high school – I wanted to have that impact on students. We are not going to get anywhere if we don't have an education – I wanted to help other mob succeed.

I started as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Officer working across a few schools. Every school is so different; the role really opened my mind to different ways of learning. I can be a positive role model and show students that there is not just one path if you are Aboriginal but lots of opportunities, particularly when we go on the university visits - opening parents and kids up to possibilities and opportunities that will take them further.

What keeps me going is the good news stories, the success stories and seeing people try new things. I like people asking questions – people want to know things. I like having relationships that are two-way with people, so we can communicate better with each other.

I love the community stuff, being able to go into schools and working with students, hands on. I want to keep doing this; this is the perfect role for me.



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