



NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2021 ISSUE

KANTESHA'S TAKING TRAINING TO THE TORRES STRAIT

In a training first, small business owners like Kantesha Takai will play a vital role in supporting and developing a sustainable future for Indigenous businesses across Queensland, after graduating from the Advance Queensland – One Business program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Funded by the Queensland Government and delivered by TAFE Queensland, the One Business program is creating more pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to innovate and build successful businesses by exploring targeted opportunities for business growth.

Proud Torres Strait and Wuthathi woman Kantesha Takai is one of the first TAFE Queensland trained Indigenous business facilitators.

Kantesha said she was looking forward to coaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to further strengthen their businesses.

"One Business will create a pool of Indigenous business trainers who can supply business acumen training and coaching to small businesses," Kantesha said.



Kantesha Takai

"Obtaining business training through opportunities like the One Business Program, will help my people start to take control of their financial futures," she said.

Kantesha first dipped her toes into self-employment as a marketing freelancer at the age of 21, quickly learning the realities of entrepreneurship. At 27, she founded her previous business Strait Removals, which was the first 100 per cent Torres Strait Islander owned and operated removals business in the region.

At 28, Kantesha launched Lola Digital, a boutique content, creative and digital agency, delivering tailored marketing solutions and support to non-profits, government departments and businesses across Australia.

Kantesha said she was excited to pass on her learning to others in her community.

"I want to inspire young people to consider entrepreneurship and business ownership from a young age," Kantesha said.

"I believe that I can easily interpret the scary parts of business and simplify it for my people in ways and terms that are more familiar to them.

"For me, my business is driven by passion and the end goal is self-determination with the ability to share my success with others through employment, training and knowledge sharing. And, I want the same for others."

One Business was designed to help budding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander innovators explore targeted opportunities for business growth and provide Indigenous business owners and entrepreneurs with the skills to either set up a new business, enter into markets or expand their existing operations. 🌐

tafeqld.edu.au | 1300 308 233



Follow us on Facebook.
Search TAFE Queensland and your location to find us.

MAKE
GREAT
HAPPEN





Reggie Morey

REGGIE'S POSITIVELY BUOYANT ABOUT HER FUTURE

Reggie Morey never liked school before discovering an alternative learning experience, which provides students with hands-on training.

Enrolling in **SchoolTech** and becoming a **Junior Indigenous Marine and Environmental (JIME) Cadet** has changed Reggie's life.

"I went from someone who didn't know what she was doing, who didn't want to go to school, who just didn't have her life together to someone who now wants to go to school and work every day," Reggie said.

"I never thought I'd like school, but when I came to SchoolTech I loved it immediately. It's so much fun, I love going to class and sometimes I don't want to leave school at the end of the day," she said.

The JIME Cadets program provided eligible SchoolTech students like Reggie with the opportunity to follow in the footsteps of their Elders and be custodians of the environment.

JIME Cadets earned while they learnt, spending up to two days a week working on board tourism vessels.

Reggie said she loved gaining industry experience.

"I have been working on a whale tour boat and I reckon it's pretty deadly because I get to see whales all day, every day – it's so amazing! Out on the water is where I am meant to be, it's just the best experience," Reggie said.

"I'm on top of the world when I'm at work; even when I'm cleaning windows or doing dishes it's still amazing because I'm doing what I want to do and I'm where I want to be," she said.

Reggie is from the Yidinji nation and said her vocational education and training journey strengthened her cultural connections.

"When I told my grandad that I travel to Fitzroy Island as part of my job, he told me that my ancestors are connected to the island. It's amazing that today I'm working where my people used to fish and hunt."

Reggie said she enjoyed the hands-on learning environment at SchoolTech.

"I'm still studying the essential high school subjects to obtain my

Queensland Certificate of Education, but I'm also completing a **Certificate II in Engineering Pathways (MEM20413)** and a **Certificate II in Maritime Operations (Coxswain Grade 1 Near Coastal) (MAR20318)**."

"I love my trade class days. It is so much fun being in the workshop learning different things and working on engines. I can weld any type of metal, I can cut any type of metal, I can pull apart engines, I can name a lot of tools – it's awesome!"

Reggie said she never used to think positively about her future, but now she does.

"I don't think I would still be in school had I not enrolled in SchoolTech and become a JIME Cadet. I was terrible at normal school and there were a lot of people who thought I was going to be terrible at TAFE too, but my teachers are so good, they encourage me every day," Reggie said.

"These days I think my future is looking great, and my goal is to drive big boats and work on big engines someday." 🌊

MORE INFORMATION

SchoolTech is an initiative in Cairns between TAFE Queensland and Woree State High School. SchoolTech allows students to complete their senior schooling, gain their Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) and two nationally recognised qualifications while participating in work placement and vocational training.

The **JIME Cadet Program** was the brainchild of former cricketer Matthew Hayden AM and philanthropist Guy Reynolds AO through the Hayden/Reynolds Foundation.

*At time of printing, the JIME Cadet Program is now referred to as **Shoreline**.*

MENA'S PASSION FOR EMPOWERING OTHERS

Mena Waller has her sights firmly set on being an influential leader for Aboriginal advancement at a community, state and national level.

Born and raised in Rockhampton, Mena spent four years living in Brisbane and working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health before moving to Groote Eylandt in the Northern Territory. There, she pursued her passion for community development and gained a richer experience working in remote communities.

Mena turned to TAFE Queensland to upskill and enrolled in a **Diploma of Community Development** (CHC52115).

“One step to achieving my goals was to enhance my personal development. In doing so and acquiring this knowledge, I’m better placed to support and empower others in my community,” she said.

Mena belongs to the Yawuru nation and her cultural connections stretch across northern Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

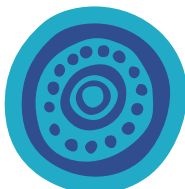
A practice development manager, Mena said her work with Save the Children was very rewarding.

“As a proud Aboriginal woman, I want to improve cultural competencies in a range of settings including early childhood and family services, in a way that upholds traditional family values, practices and knowledge,” Mena said.

“Another initiative I am working towards within my role is to improve Aboriginal workforce recruitment and development strategies.

“It’s an absolute privilege to work in the community development sector and connect with passionate people and build close relationships with local leaders to support the betterment of communities and families,” she said.

Mena said she was able to work full time and complete her training via online classrooms.



“It’s evident that TAFE Queensland recognises that flexible study options are crucial to those who already live and work in regional and remote communities, which is often where the most intense community development occurs,” Mena said.

“It’s an absolute privilege to work in the community development sector...”

“Relocating from Queensland, I was pleased to know that I could still study with a recognised institution during my time in the Northern Territory.

“I also appreciated the passion of the teaching staff at TAFE Queensland and their practical understanding and experience in the sector,” she said.

Mena said she was grateful to receive a **TAFE Queensland Scholarship** to support her training.

“Studying comes at a cost and living remotely comes with unique barriers and challenges. The scholarship



money ensured that there was a nominated amount specifically for my studies, instead of chewing into money that I would otherwise need to offset high living costs,” she said.

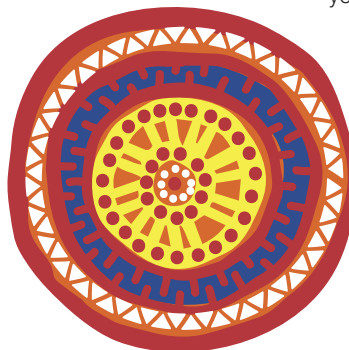
“It was really nice to receive the scholarship because it meant that my commitment and passion for community development was being recognised and rewarded.

“Being successful for this scholarship gave me confidence in the work that I’ve already done and will continue to do within the community development sector.”

Mena said it’s never too late to pursue your passion.

“It’s important to remember that we are always learning and that seeking further studies benefits yourself, your family and community,” she said.

“It’s great to consider new opportunities and to dedicate yourself to something you’re passionate about and interested in.”



TRIPLLET SISTERS ARE DOING IT FOR THEMSELVES

A desire to improve their education and learn more about their Aboriginal culture brought triplets Gloria, Chantel and Eyvonne Sturgeon-Walsh to TAFE Queensland.

The sisters from Townsville have overcome a series of physical and mental challenges to smash through barriers and gain not one, but two cultural art qualifications.

After being diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and intellectual impairments, the triplets faced a tough time at school.

“Growing up we were bullied, which gave me depression, and we were put in a corner and told we were stupid. All three of us decided to do cultural

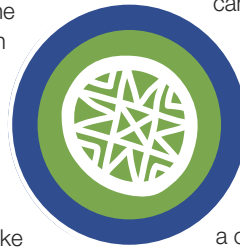
arts training to prove to the bullies that we are smart,” Eyvonne said.

The triplets’ willpower to overcome obstacles improved their self-esteem and showed them they’re capable of achieving anything.

Gloria faced additional challenges after being born with glaucoma, but she didn’t let that stand in her way of achieving her study goals.

“It’s very challenging to study when you have glaucoma, but I found it helpful to use some of the gadgets I got from Vision Australia,” Gloria said.

“I use a HumanWare Connect 12 Magnifier, which helps me read and look around, as well as other assistive apps like Seeing AI and Lazarillo.”



Dedicated and driven, the triplets undertook their qualifications back-to-back at the Cairns and Townsville (Pimlico) campuses. The sisters completed a **Certificate III in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Arts** (CUA30515) and a **Certificate IV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Arts** (CUA40615) despite additional challenges brought on by the COVID-19 lockdown.

“I hope other people in a similar situation can see what we have achieved and that it inspires them to keep going forward,” Eyvonne said.

“You may have a barrier in front of you, but you can go around it, over it or straight through it.”

The sisters have always shared a close bond and Chantel said they love creating art.



Gloria, Eyvonne and Chantel Sturgeon-Walsh

“Our grandfather showed us how to draw from a very young age. My sisters and I wanted to study cultural arts to learn more about our Aboriginal culture and at the same time learn more about art,” Chantel said.

“Aboriginal artists do more than just dot painting. For example, my sisters and I have made drawings, lino prints, watercolours, screen prints and dry etches.”

As their studies progressed, the triplets learned more about their First Nations’ heritage.

“We belong to two tribes; one is the Kalkadoon people from around Mount Isa but my family didn’t know much about the other tribe,” Chantel said.

“During our studies, we found out our second tribe is KuKu Yalanji from the Mossman region.

“While we were in Cairns for our block training we decided to visit Mossman, which was around an hour away. We went on a hike there and I felt really connected to the area, it felt like home,” she said.

Throughout their training, the sisters drew on their own unique inspirations to create their artwork, including spirits and guardians, their birth totem the platypus, flowers, and influences from other cultures. The triplets finished their studies by showcasing several pieces of artwork in a TAFE Queensland exhibition.

Gloria said a lot of the work she creates is influenced by nature.

“I really love drawing flowers and for the exhibition I created a drypoint etching called Wild Flowers,” Gloria said.

“I used a sharp drawing needle to scratch my design, but because of my glaucoma it was hard to see what I was doing, so I relied on touch to create my work. I then used ink and a printing press to finish my drypoint.

“I also really love animation and I hope to start my own art business and draw people in anime,” she said.

Eyvonne said her recent work tapped into her passion for Japanese folklore.

“I’m really interested in the Japanese fox mask called a Kitsune. My artwork

entitled The Fierce Thylacine Spirit is a design like the Kitsune mask, but instead of a fox it’s a Tasmanian tiger,” Eyvonne said.

“This animal did not deserve death, so to remember it I created a mixed media, watercolour portrait.”

Chantel said animals often feature in her artwork.

“One of my pieces in the exhibition depicted a flood which had separated platypuses from their nest,” Chantel said.

“It’s a lino print, so I used a piece of lino and carving tools to cut my design. Then using ink and paper, the design transferred in a printing press.

“It took me three days to complete my design and I made it during COVID lockdown,” she said.

Gloria, Chantel and Eyvonne hope to share their creative skills with members of their family to ensure their culture continues to be expressed through art. 🌀



Gloria Sturgeon-Walsh, Wild Flowers



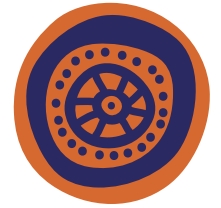
Eyvonne Sturgeon-Walsh, The Fierce Thylacine Spirit



Chantel Sturgeon-Walsh, The Platypus and Their Nest



CONNECTING COMMUNITIES TO THEIR CULTURE



For Tarsha Jones, enrolling to study the Diploma of Child, Youth and Family Intervention (CHC50313) wasn't a planned move, but it did change her life for the better.

When single mother-of-four Tarsha visited TAFE Queensland's Caboolture campus to enrol in a certificate course, she found that the training wasn't running that semester.

Undiscouraged, and determined to study towards a career in human services, she decided to enrol in the **Diploma of Child, Youth and Family Intervention (CHC50313)** instead – a decision that has since paid dividends.

"My training gave me the tools and confidence for working through the

challenges of this sector," Tarsha said.

"I learnt skills transferrable to my job, which have helped me succeed in employment. I know how to listen, understand and empathise to help people who have suffered trauma – and I'm really proud of what I do," she said.

Tarsha said that her TAFE Queensland qualification and the guidance from her educators set her up for success in the challenging human services sector.

"The educators I had, who have worked all over the industry, were able to give me a sense of what it's like in the community and they prepared me so well for the situations I'm now working in," Tarsha said.

"After completing the diploma in 2017 I worked with the Department of Disability Services for nine months prior to their closing when the National Disability Services rolled out.

"From there, I joined the Benevolent Society as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child development specialist, partnering with NDIS in the community with a focus on early childhood intervention.

"I'm now a senior practitioner for community engagement working with

Indigenous families and communities, while internally I'm building the capacity of our staffs' cultural awareness," she said.

Working in the human services sector with a focus on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is a sweet spot for Tarsha, as it combines elements of her personal journey and her professional training.


"Growing up, I was denied my Aboriginal culture and even in some situations today I'm still not allowed to acknowledge it," Tarsha said.

"I love identifying as Aboriginal, and the help and support I've received from the community on my journey has been amazing. But there are many Aboriginal people out there that are in the same situation as me and the stigma that exists can cause them distress.

"My training gave me the tools to understand and identify other people who are experiencing what I have been through."

Tarsha credits the combination of her lived experience and her training for growing into her role so quickly.

"I've been on a massive personal journey throughout my adulthood and working in the community has opened my eyes to the many others who are in similar situations as me," Tarsha said.

"Because the course is so hands-on, I have the skills and tools to succeed and understand what's happening when working with vulnerable families in the community." 



Tarsha Jones

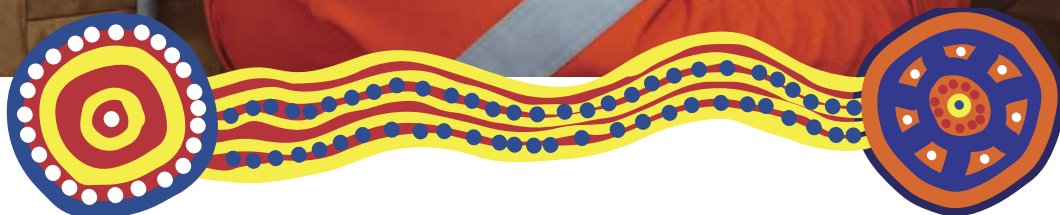


SCHOLARSHIPS

Achieve your career goals with the help of a TAFE Queensland Scholarship. Visit scholarships.tafeqld.edu.au for further information.



Reece Zamiak



A JOLT IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

A small electric shock as a child left Reece Zamiak fascinated with electricity and on a path to become an electrician.

Despite his dad being a sparky, Reece said his family connection to the electrical trade wasn't what persuaded him to join.

"One day I was playing with the old yellow, red and white cable that goes in the back of the TV and I got a little shock, that's what got me intrigued about the field of electricity. It wasn't intentional – falling into the same shoes as my dad – it just happened that way," he said.

Reece said he investigated the trade further to make sure it was the right career choice.

"I decided that I should actually do some work experience prior to applying for an apprenticeship. I did and realised that becoming an electrician was definitely the job that I could see myself doing every day."

Reece went on to enrol in a **Certificate II in Electrotechnology (Career Start)** (UEE22011).

"The pre-apprenticeship training was actually really good because it taught

me the fundamentals of electricity and other important things like workplace safety," Reece said.

"I was also able to gain hands-on training in the workshop, which was definitely really good because it exposed me to the work I would be doing if I was an apprentice under a tradesperson.

"When I did apply for an apprenticeship, I was told that it was really good that I had already completed pre-apprenticeship training and my prior learning was recognised, so I didn't have to repeat anything," he said.

Reece travelled from his home town of Weipa to the TAFE Queensland Cairns campus to complete a **Certificate III in Electrotechnology Electrician** (UEE30811) via block training.

Reece said his apprenticeship exposed him to a wide variety of electrical work.

"Working at a mine site is a lot different to your normal domestic sort of electrical experience. I was rotated between a number of workshops so I was able to learn about how everyone goes about their job, from electrical workers in a distribution powerhouse to a line repair worker," Reece said.

"During my apprenticeship I completed all sorts of tasks, from installing delicate network cable systems to fitting ceiling fans and placing cables underneath concrete to support the installation of large equipment."

Reece, a Torres Strait Islander and Teppathiggi Aboriginal man, is a natural born leader and mentor. He has visited schools in Bamaga, Injinoo and the Torres Strait to encourage students to consider a trade career in mining.

"I tell anyone who is interested in a career as an electrician to go for it. My advice is to ask for information and try to get some industry exposure through work experience or a pre-apprenticeship course," Reece said.

"The electrical industry is a lot of fun, it's so interesting and there are so many different types of jobs and work available."

Reece's commitment to his trade and enthusiasm to give back was acknowledged at the 2020 TAFE Queensland Cairns Trade Excellence Awards. He took home two trophies, recognised as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Trades Student of the Year and Outstanding Apprentice of the Year. 🏆

CULTURAL RUNWAY BRINGS TOGETHER TAFE QUEENSLAND STUDENTS, GRADUATES AND TEACHERS





Fierce, powerful and moving are just some of the words used to describe a special catwalk and cultural fashion event held in Cairns and broadcast on NITV.

The Walking in Two Worlds show was launched by First Nations Fashion and Design, which was founded by TAFE Queensland fashion graduate Grace Lillian Lee.

The event saw Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander models hit the runway, wearing fashion created by Indigenous designers, including a collection by TAFE Queensland cultural arts teacher Lynelle Flinders.

TAFE Queensland's beauty and hairdressing students and teachers from Cairns and Townsville showcased their incredible skills by creating the models' looks.

First Nations Fashion and Design founder Grace Lillian Lee said fashion

is tangible and relatable and can act as a form of reconciliation

"First Nations Fashion and Design was born out of a dream to be united, using fashion as a vessel to share how rich and diverse our culture is, but also continuing our storylines for the next generation," Grace said.

"We are about preservation and the continuation of the evolution of our culture. We are about growing the ecology of our Indigenous fashion industry and creating economic opportunities for our rural and urban Indigenous people."

“ First Nations Fashion and Design was born out of a dream to be united... ”

TAFE Queensland is proud to continue to support the movement to preserve and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture through art and fashion. 





REACH YOUR
FULL
POTENTIAL
BY MATCHING
YOUR
PERSONALITY
PROFILE WITH
THE
STUDY JOURNEY
THAT IS
RIGHT
FOR
YOU.

Visit
tafeqld.edu.au
and take
a quiz using
myPROFILER
to match
training with
a career.



ASHLEI BRINGS HER ART TO LIFE

Proud Waluwarra woman Ashlei Major has gone viral on social media after combining her Aboriginal heritage with her love for makeup.

Ashlei is turning her passion into a career, after completing the **Diploma of Screen and Media (Specialist Make Up Services)** (CUA51015) in Townsville.

The course, delivered by Huxley School of Makeup in partnership with TAFE Queensland, provides makeup lovers like Ashlei the opportunity to learn the specialist skills they need to be able to work in the film and television industry.

For passionate realism artist Ashlei, the training paid off immediately, with her incredible skills amassing a following on social media platform TikTok and attracting the attention of brands looking to collaborate.

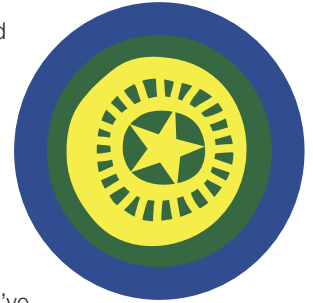
“My biggest achievement yet is definitely working with brands and companies as a content creator,” Ashlei said.

“I was first contacted by Mecca to be on their PR list, which I’m still over the moon about, and I’m also currently working with Adore Beauty, creating content on TikTok, IGTV and YouTube. I’ve also worked with Frank Body.

“I’m still on cloud nine about both of these amazing opportunities. During a time where there is so much hardship, I’ve found a career I believe I gel into so well,” she said.

Art has been a part of Ashlei’s life for as long as she can remember, but it wasn’t until she was 19-years-old that she realised she could bring her art to life through the magic of makeup.

“I’ve always had that creativity before I found a passion in makeup, but it’s allowed me to see makeup as another art form,” she said.



Ashlei Major avant-garde model look

“My best friend is actually a makeup artist and beauty advisor, and I would always be captivated by the process of the application – she’s the one who began this passion that I now have for makeup.”

Over the 28-week diploma course, Ashlei learned a broad range of skills in addition to designing, applying and removing makeup, including maintaining makeup and hair continuity, designing and applying special effects makeup and prosthetics, promoting products and planning social media engagement.

Throughout her studies, Ashlei shared some of her favourite makeup creations on social media, gaining thousands of followers and more than 360,000 views on her TikTok account. Ashlei’s body art and avant-garde looks are particularly special to her, because they have allowed her to share her culture and journey with others.

“Growing up, I didn’t really know much about my Aboriginal culture, but I’ve always been a proud Aboriginal woman. I still am and I always will be.”

Ashley felt an overwhelming desire to learn more about her heritage following the passing of her nan.

“During Sorry Time it became really clear that finding out who I am, culturally and spiritually, had to become a priority in my life. I need to continue our stories, our culture and our history,” Ashlei said.

“My pop had asked me to paint the cross for my Nan’s grave and I wanted to create something special for nan, because she was a very special woman. That’s when the artwork about my spiritual journey began.

“As I’ve never painted an Aboriginal painting before, I started to learn. I learnt about my family totem, my language and where

my country is. So painting the cross for nan – it being my first Murri painting – it’s really special to me.

“While I was studying, we were asked to create body art based on how isolation has affected us and I chose to reflect this journey I’d been through.



Ashlei Major

“I’ve always been a proud Aboriginal woman. I still am and I always will be.”

The content that I created from this challenge is actually what opened up the work I’m now doing with these brands.

“I showcased this journey again for my avant-garde photo shoot. The whole look was designed to look like my model, who is a proud Gangula and Barunggam woman, was walking through the painting, being one with the journey and being one with her ancestors,” she said.

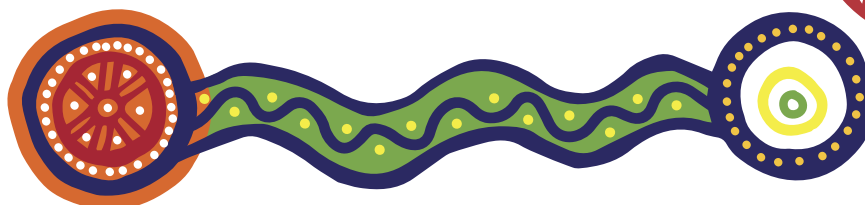
Ashlei said she was excited about her career in makeup and was thrilled to receive bookings immediately after graduating.

“It’s such a rewarding career – having the ability to transform people is special,” Ashlei said.

The partnership between TAFE Queensland and Huxley School of Makeup provides students with hands-on fashion, cinema and special effects makeup techniques.

Huxley School of Makeup course convenor, Michael Huxley said he was impressed with the work students have produced.

“I’m incredibly proud of all Huxley students who completed this course. In particular, Ashlei who managed to cultivate an amazing profile through social media while exceeding the demands of the course,” Michael said. 🌟





CHOLENA HELPS FORGE CONNECTIONS THROUGH ART



Cholena Hughes

Cholena Hughes is using her creativity to inspire others after turning her passion into a rewarding teaching career with TAFE Queensland.

Cholena Hughes' journey with TAFE Queensland has led her down an unexpected yet highly-rewarding path. From learning artistic techniques to teaching others how to express themselves through creativity, she now uses the power of art to help rehabilitate prisoners at Woodford Men's Correctional Centre.

Cholena first discovered her passion for art during high school, however she initially put down the brush to pursue a career in hospitality. But a loved one helped Cholena find the confidence to turn her creativity into a career.

"After marrying my husband Peter in 2006, my mum returned some of my keepsakes that I had stored at her house," Cholena said.

"When my husband saw my portfolio he said, 'You're an artist — you must follow your heart,' and he encouraged me to further my studies," she said.

Cholena enrolled in the **Certificate III in Visual Arts** (CUA31115) through TAFE Queensland and she enjoyed the course so much she decided to continue her studies with a **Diploma of Visual Arts** (CUA51115).

"I chose TAFE because going to university felt like it was too big a commitment after several years out of school," Cholena said.

"The teachers were really fun and encouraging. I can remember learning art history during the first year of my diploma and falling in love with a new artist or movement every week."

Hungry to learn more, Cholena continued on to university to complete a Bachelor of Fine Art, during which she was approached with a unique opportunity to pass on her skills to others as a trainer with TAFE Queensland.

"My aunty was working as an art activities officer at Woodford Correctional Centre and they were looking for a teacher who could deliver some short courses on drawing, painting, ceramics and sculpture. She knew I'd been studying art, so she put me in touch with the officer who coordinated the courses."

Cholena began teaching short courses at the prison as part of the VET Inside initiative, designed to rehabilitate prisoners by creating education and training pathways that lead to potential employment. The program also helps prisoners with reintegration into the community and was so successful that Cholena was tasked with delivering a full certificate II qualification at the facility.

Though it may be a daunting prospect for many people, Cholena said teaching at the prison had been an incredibly rewarding experience that has enabled her to truly make a difference in the lives of her students.

“ I believe art is the oldest form of networking... ”

"I love to share the knowledge and skills I have and I believe art can make a significant difference in learning about yourself," Cholena said.

"Teaching art in the prison gave me the opportunity to inspire, influence and encourage the men in a positive way. I have the opportunity to teach them skills to help them realise their ideas and potential, to see them light up when they feel excited or proud about what they are creating, and see their sense of accomplishment when they obtain their qualification.

"Many of my students in the correctional centre haven't even completed high school, so to receive a qualification really affects them. I have even heard some of the prisoners talk about how doing the course has improved their communication with their spouse or children," she said.

Cholena said her students were incredibly grateful for the opportunity they've been given, with some going out of their way to show their appreciation.

"When I returned to work after my father had passed away, they had made me a card with a lotus flower on it and recited what I had talked about regarding symbolism and my example that the lotus is a metaphor for getting through dark times because it pushes past the dark muddy waters and rises above it all," she said.

As a proud Koa woman raised on Kabi-Kabi country, Cholena was instrumental in helping TAFE Queensland add the **Certificate II in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Arts** (CUA20415) to the VET Inside program, providing

First Nations students with the opportunity to develop an understanding of their own cultural identity.

"I believe courses like these are really important as they create opportunities for First Nations people to connect more with their culture – especially those who live in mixed families and may not have grown up with community cultural knowledge," Cholena said.

"They also provide students with the chance to connect with each other and build bigger, stronger networks, build relationships with like-minded people, and explore their ideas through art, which is such an intrinsic part of culture.

"Some of my Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students within the prison haven't grown up with family, and this course teaches them so much about their culture and helps them develop a feeling of belonging and self-worth," she said.

Cholena's connection to the land is a strong influence in her own creations, with Cholena often using materials and symbolism from the natural environment in her art. This is a theme that is evident in a collaborative piece she completed alongside nine other Indigenous artists

from the South East Queensland First Nations Art Collective that demonstrates how art connects people.

The Together We Stand project – which was supported by Creative Arts Alliance and funded by Arts Queensland, Moreton Bay Regional Council, and Access Arts – saw each artist create their own artwork over a section of cyanotype that Cholena created as the base.

"For me, this project is particularly important during this time when we must isolate for the sake of the health of our nation, because it kept us in dialogue with each other. It provided the opportunity as an artist to explore ways of expressing our thoughts, feelings and ideas about what it meant to us.

"Each artist has their own story within their piece, yet there are very strong common threads of feeling and

concepts underlying the individual stories. The project is very aptly named, because in the throes of life and its ups and downs, together we stand," she said.

Cholena has also been involved in a range of other artistic and teaching projects across the Sunshine Coast, including the



Together We Stand art project, featuring work by Cholena Hughes.

The individual artworks were then assembled to create one larger piece, accompanied by a musical score, that demonstrates how even through the isolation of COVID-19, the artists remain connected.

"I believe art is the oldest form of networking, a social media platform where people have listened and seen each other's stories for thousands of generations," Cholena said.

Indigenous Ways of Learning workshop, the First Nations Forum, the Kids In Action Program, and a project for Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve to design and create tactile panel signs to help visitors identify plants and wildlife. 🌀

STAGE YOUR COMEBACK

FREE AND LOW COST TRAINING

Our JobTrainer funded courses are for school-leavers and job seekers looking to develop new skills.

Over 70 free or low cost courses available*.

Visit tafeqld.edu.au/jobtrainer for the variety of study areas.

*Eligibility criteria applies for students to access funding. Training is delivered by TAFE Queensland and jointly funded by the Australian Government and Queensland Government.





CONNECTING KIDS TO INDIGENOUS CULTURE

Tiesha Martin-King

A proud Bundjalung woman from New South Wales, Tiesha Martin-King has always had a lifelong aspiration to work with and inspire Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and communities.

From past experience, Tiesha knows how important role models can be to young people.

"I understand the importance for Indigenous children to have a strong, positive Indigenous role model in their life to identify with and look up to, as it was something I didn't have growing up," she said.

Tiesha's drive to be a positive influence paid off when she was offered a job while on placement as part of her **Certificate III in Education Support (CHC30213)** studies.

As an Indigenous support worker at Ormeau State School, Tiesha provides social, emotional and academic support to over 30 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Tiesha said she was proud to be helping each student become successful learners at school.

"Being a role model is an important part of my position and I feel privileged to be in a job whereby I can help improve awareness and understanding of Indigenous culture at school," she said.

Tiesha is currently working on incorporating Indigenous culture into the school learning environment to promote diversity.

Deputy Principal of Ormeau State School, Teneale Harker said the school is very lucky to have such a talented and energetic individual on their staff.

"We were excited to be able to offer Tiesha a position after seeing her in action during vocational placement," Teneale said.

"Her natural affinity with children, her knowledge and understanding of learning support and her passion for her work stood out.

"Her ideas and activities improve the whole school's understanding of Indigenous culture and allow us to introduce Indigenous culture into the school environment in engaging ways," she said.

Not only did Tiesha gain practical skills and ultimately a job during her training at TAFE Queensland, but she also boosted her self-belief.

"My confidence grew while studying with TAFE Queensland and it has been invaluable in the workplace which has made me a strong leader, communicator and team player," Tiesha said.

"I now have the confidence to openly share my ideas about Indigenous

issues at the school and in the education system that should be addressed."


Tiesha's drive and enthusiasm was recognised at the 2020 South East Regional Queensland Training Awards, where she was named a finalist in the Vocational Student of the Year and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year categories.

To someone who is thinking about studying at TAFE Queensland, Tiesha said to not let any hesitations hold them back.

"Studying with TAFE Queensland opened up so many great opportunities and provided me with a job outcome, so if you're thinking about it then you should definitely do it," Tiesha said.

"I wouldn't be on the right career path and closer to my dream without the training and support from TAFE Queensland," she said.

When the time is right, Tiesha wants to spread her wings and take her skills and passion across Australia.

"My aim is to one day be able to travel around to remote Aboriginal communities and help the children that need it most." 



STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Everyone's journey is different and sometimes you need some extra support. We're here to help.

Our student support services are available for all of our students, making your learning experience just that little bit easier.

Student Support Officers can offer advice and help on topics, including:

- career options and employment opportunities
- choosing the right course or pathway
- enrolments, financial assistance, Centrelink ABSTUDY enquiries, and funding opportunities
- accommodation, travel and welfare
- government department, community service providers and advocacy services referrals
- learning and study support
- enrolment into 'Away from Base' courses

Counselling Support

Short-term counselling services are available to all students. Counselling sessions are free and completely confidential.

AccessAbility Support

If you identify with having a disability, our staff can work with you to develop a support plan.

RESIDENTIAL BLOCK TRAINING

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students don't need to live near one of our campuses to study a course with us.

Depending on your location, TAFE Queensland delivers a number of courses via residential study blocks. These courses are registered as Away from Base courses, which means you may be able to have your travel, accommodation and a meal allowance paid when you attend residential blocks. Students must be registered with ABSTUDY to be eligible for Away from Base funding.

LIBRARY SERVICES

All students are able to access the TAFE Queensland library network. The library network offers a range of physical and digital services and resources to support you throughout your study.

tafeqld.edu.au/library

CONTACT US

For more information on the range of student support services available or to make contact with a Student Support Officer, visit tafeqld.edu.au/student-support-services





Information is correct at time of printing, April 2021. For the most up-to-date information refer to our website at tafeqld.edu.au.

In many areas of Australia it is considered offensive to publish photographs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are deceased. Readers are warned that this publication may inadvertently contain such photographs.

Artwork elements from TAFE Queensland's Reconciliation Action Plan artwork 'Connecting Knowledge – Connecting Cultures' by Riki Salam, We are 27 Creative. Visit tafeqld.edu.au/rap to view the Reconciliation Action Plan.

1300 308 233

tafeqld.edu.au

