Raising the next generation of Indigenous leaders

By Clare Stack
Broome Senior High School

The following is the transcript of a speech given by 2021 SSTUWA Reconciliation in Action (RIA) award winner Clare Stack (pictured right), of Broome Senior High School, at November State Council last year. The RIA award celebrates the work of SSTUWA members who are making positive contributions towards reconciliation.

Thank you so much, it's a pleasure to be here.

I wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Whadjuk (Perth region) people.

I wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

My name is Clare Stack and I am the current Aboriginal Education Coordinator and teacher of the Year 10 Aboriginal Cultural Leaders Program class and the teacher of the Year 11 and 12's Aboriginal Intercultural Studies HASS (Humanities and Social Sciences) general unit at Broome Senior High School.

I am extremely honoured to be receiving such a significant and important award as the Reconciliation in Action Award.

Thank you to the State School Teachers' Union of WA for offering this award and providing opportunities of recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers.

I am earnestly grateful for the recognition I have received for my work. I am very sure that every other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nominee for this award was as capable, if not more, of winning this award.

I have faced several challenges on my way here, but each one of them has only strengthened me to make me the person I am today; a thorough professional who knows exactly what she wants; someone who sets her eyes on a goal and does not lose sight of it, unless it is achieved.

Winning this award would not have been possible without the inspiration I have received from my work colleagues, my team of four AIEOs (Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers) and my principal, Mr Matt Burt, for whom I have the deepest respect, and from whom I have derived the strength to challenge myself and perform better at each stage.

I would like to share with you the wonderful Aboriginal program that has landed me here today in receiving this award.

The Broome Senior High School (BSHS) community has worked tirelessly over many years to ensure that all of its students are afforded the best quality education that a school can offer.

In particular, Broome's strong approach to meeting the needs of its more than 300 Aboriginal students, who come to the school from all parts of the Kimberley and from across Australia, is an excellent example of how to best cater for the individual needs of its unique cohort of students.

The program is called the Aboriginal Cultural Leaders Program. This unique program is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned, planned, shaped and delivered program and it is only delivered at Broome Senior High School.

The Aboriginal Cultural Leaders Program is an opportunity to not only celebrate the hard work but to encourage much needed change to improve the lives of Aboriginal children who attend BSHS.

The original thinking was making plans around how Aboriginal students were going to be leaders for other Aboriginal students, particularly those who came to Broome Senior High School from remote communities.

The Aboriginal Education Team at Broome Senior High School has worked endlessly in liaising with community and valuing the Aboriginal culture and language in order to get the Aboriginal Cultural Leaders Program up and running.

When Broome Senior High School was looking at the Aboriginal Cultural Leaders Program getting off the ground, it continued to be very challenging to plan due to trying to work in with the overcrowded existing curriculum.

A number of ways were looked at. For Ms Stephanie Armstrong, who was the founder of this program, this was a major obstacle.

But with the continued support of key staff at the school, Mr Burt, Ms Denise Shillinglaw, Ms (Ningali) Lawford-Wolf, Mr Bryon Little and Ms Rebecca Famlonga, this program gained traction for the benefit of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students of Broome Senior High School.

In addition, Mr Bryon Little, the VET (vocational education and training) coordinator, made the suggestion to bring the Aboriginal Cultural Leaders Program into the VET space as VET could deliver a Certificate I in Leadership which also would contribute towards a student's WACE (Western Australian Certificate of Education), thereby adding to their graduation pathway.

By doing it this way, BSHS could then also solve the problem of implementing the Aboriginal Cultural Leaders Program into our existing curriculum, in what is an already crowded timetable, by delivering the program in short block weeks.

The 2021 Aboriginal Cultural Leadership Program students began their Certificate I in Leadership with Goolarri Media Enterprises.

The certificate was completed in a series of three-day blocks throughout the year. Mr Bryon Little approached several RTOs (registered training organisations) and settled on Goolarri Media Enterprises, as they are a local RTO with strong connections to the local Aboriginal community.

Planning meetings were conducted for the following year and a program was developed that offered students learning opportunities.

The program has been a significant success, with students commencing Term 1.

The students took part in a Smoking Ceremony, which was held at Nyamba Buru Yawuru to celebrate the launch of the Aboriginal Cultural Leaders Program.

The Aboriginal Cultural Leaders Program established partnerships with Goolarri Media Enterprises, Yawardani Jan-ga, Kimberley Land Council and Nyamba Buru Yawuru.

Students have engaged in Yawuru language sessions.

With my team of four AIEOs we continue to teach, support and encourage this small group of Aboriginal Cultural Leaders to develop leadership behaviours that will continue to make change in their communities.

I would like to particularly acknowledge the late Ms Lawford-Wolf who always said: "Never forget who you are and where you come from."

Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge Ms Linah Enosa who has led the EALD (English Additional Language Dialect) work in the program and has just been awarded the 2021 Kate Mullin Educator of the Year Award.

The group of Aboriginal Cultural Leaders attend one lesson a week with me and the AIEOs, and together we focus on leadership skills such as relationships, respect, responsibility and change.

I am currently working with Mr Bryon Little and Dr Elaine Rabbitt from Goolarri Media Enterprises to continue the Certificate I in Leadership with the Year 10 cohort for 2022.

On a closing note, though we have many programs there is still the need to bring a focus on culture and identity and the understanding that Aboriginal people bring their own unique ways to learn. The key to change is through Aboriginal lens and Aboriginal voice.

Remember: Never forget who you are and where you come from.

Thank you very much!

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
ABN 54 478 094 635 © 2026