

UNSW Arts, Design & Architecture

Indigenous Strategy 2021



UNSW
SYDNEY

Artist Credit

Acknowledgment
of Country

Commentary from
Dr BJ Newton

Commentary from
Professor
Claire Annesley

Commentary from
UNSW's Pro Vice
Chancellor Indigenous

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**Credit: Leilani Tallulah Knight,
"U gonna listen now?", 2021**

This work, entitled "U gonna listen now?" speaks to my experiences both throughout my university career and its influence on my identity as a Queer Indigenous artist. It draws on the collective knowledges and traditions passed throughout my family and the subsequent inter-generational traumas obtained through regressive government policies and harmful racial stereotypes.

This work mirrors the discontent felt following the dismantling of the Indigenous support system at Art & Design following the cessation of Tess Allas' contract and the steady rise of the student led #StandWithTess movement.

However, at its heart this piece truly reflects the resilience of Indigenous cultures and is a beacon to centre community and healing at the centre of institutional policies. As I have shared my pain with UNSW and encapsulated my tremulous journey within the institution's domain, I seek truth telling and justice from those in power.

Artist bio

Leilani Tallulah Knight is a Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi Queer artist whose artistic practise aims to integrate the traditional works of her family with her own abstract style while facilitating conversations around culture, time & place. Her works are heavily influenced by the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from Land and Lore which are inextricably linked. She is fuelled through her experiences and family history surrounding racism and culture and explores her journey into becoming LGBTQ+.



'This artwork was commissioned by UNSW Arts, Design & Architecture.'

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Acknowledgment of Country

UNSW acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their knowledges and traditions as the oldest continuing cultures on earth. We pay our respect to Elders both past and present. UNSW is located on the unceded Country of the Bidjigal (Kensington campus), Gadigal (Sydney City and Paddington Campuses) and Ngunnawal peoples (UNSW Canberra) who are the Traditional Custodians of the lands where each campus of UNSW is situated.



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Commentary from ADA Associate Dean Indigenous, Dr BJ Newton

I would like to thank the wonderful Aboriginal staff and students who have contributed to the development of this strategy, and our non-Indigenous colleagues who have supported us. A massive thank you to Leilani Knight for her very powerful and captivating artwork. It is a gift that we as a faculty will always treasure.

We first conceptualised our own Faculty Indigenous Strategy - taking inspiration from the 'UNSW Indigenous Strategy' - nearly two years ago. We know what is needed to make our faculty culturally safe and genuinely inclusive for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff, and to improve the way our faculty engages with Aboriginal communities in research, with Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in teaching, and to 'pay the rent' on Bidjigal and Gadigal lands (where UNSW Arts, Design & Architecture is located). This is our opportunity to make a faculty that we as First Nations Australians can be truly proud of.

There is a lot of work to do to ensure this strategy is honoured and the changes we make become a part of the everyday culture and functioning of the faculty in years to come. With the support of our committed Dean Claire Annesley, our task as a faculty for the next few years is to make the strategy come alive. I feel very privileged and excited to lead this work.



Commentary from ADA Dean, Professor Claire Annesley

UNSW Arts, Design & Architecture is a new faculty, established January 2021 with the following vision and mission:

- Through creativity, collaboration and inclusion we seek and solve problems to improve life on earth.
- Together we listen, challenge, create and share diverse knowledge about people, place and cultures to enable lives with purpose.

This Indigenous Strategy forms the foundation of our diverse new faculty and sets the direction for fulfilling its vision and mission. It commits UNSW ADA to become a place that is culturally safe and inclusive for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff and guests, and that improves how we engage with First Nations' communities and knowledges.

This is an Indigenous-led strategy which has my full support. It commits me and my non-Indigenous colleagues to listen and learn about the people, place and cultures of the lands on which we study and work. I am grateful to Winangala Gurrugurrubaa, Associate Dean Indigenous BJ Newton and other First Nations colleagues in UNSW ADA for their time and generosity since I arrived in Australia in 2020, with lots to learn.



Commentary from UNSW Pro Vice Chancellor Indigenous, Professor Megan Davis

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It is a pleasure to introduce the ADA Indigenous Strategy, UNSW's first formal faculty-specific response to UNSW's core Indigenous Strategy launched in 2018. UNSW's Indigenous Strategy takes a whole-of-university approach, driven forward by three pillars – Culture and Country, Give Back, and Grow Our Own – underpinned by an Education and Workforce Plan. Underpinning these pillars is the central theme of the Indigenous Strategy: Truth and Justice as anchored in the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

To have a strategy be successful, however, and to truly be 'whole-of-university', you need the entire University community to commit to its ethos and ambition. This ADA Indigenous Strategy is an important step forward for the faculty, showing a significant commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, researchers, and students, and to improving the environment that we, as First Nations people, work and learn in.

Importantly, it is a faculty strategy that is led by Aboriginal staff and backed-up by faculty resources. I congratulate the inaugural ADA Associate Dean Indigenous, Wiradjuri woman, Dr BJ Newton, in leading this faculty strategy, and working to have its themes align with the pillars of the UNSW Indigenous Strategy. And I applaud the commitment and foresight of the Dean, Claire Annesley, who has made this happen and has been a leader on campus in engaging with the Indigenous strategy, Indigenous issues generally and directly with me as PVCI.

I look forward to working with Dr Newton, her team, and the ADA Faculty in achieving the vision set out in the following pages. I have been connected to UNSW for two decades during my academic career, and I am proud to see the great work that is happening across all faculties driven by UNSW's Indigenous Strategy. There is always more work to do, and this commitment from ADA confirms the long-term vision of the faculty.

Within the UNSW Indigenous Strategy, we adopted sand dunes as our motif. UNSW's Kensington campus is built upon ancient sand dunes on Bidjigal/Bedegal Country, which you can still feel today as you walk up from lower campus to the top. It is a distinctive cultural and environmental characteristic of the land on which UNSW's main campus resides, an important place where ancient Aboriginal polities have thrived for thousands of years.

The motif also helps explain the distinctive nature of our Indigenous Strategy: Each of our "three pillars" are like sand dunes, inextricably linked to the other. Like the formation of sand dunes, if the wind blows across one dune, the structure of the other sand dunes is impacted and changes shape. No one pillar takes precedence over another, but rather are influenced by each other.

I welcome the ADA Indigenous strategy and the faculty's commitment to the UNSW Indigenous Strategy. This is very important because it is the disciplines within ADA that can lead the way on truth and justice including history and public architecture and design. UNSW has been a leader in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education for years, and with work set out in these pages, it will continue to be so into the future.

Professor Megan Davis,
Cobble Cobble woman from the Barrungam Nation
UNSW Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous and Director of Nura Gil

Our Commitment



As a community, UNSW Arts, Design & Architecture (ADA) acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have survived and thrived through centuries of systemic injustice, exclusion and erasure. Universities have significantly contributed to the disadvantage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities by facilitating racist structures and harmful research practices. ADA is therefore committed to making a place where First Nations staff and students can flourish personally, culturally, and intellectually, secure in knowing that this history is recognised, and that their diverse experiences, knowledges and cultures are understood and valued.

The faculty is committed to ensuring that collaboratively developed, productive and purposeful policies and practices are established, to affect long-term change in the educational outcomes of First Nations students and the intellectual and cultural integrity of Indigenous teaching and research across the faculty.

It is crucial to resource and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, students and programs to realise their potential and purpose, and we will prioritise implementing a clear pipeline for professional and academic development, and employment opportunities for students and staff to achieve what they want in the world.

Part of this commitment includes upskilling and supporting non-Indigenous staff across the faculty in developing cultural reflexivity and competence, to be best equipped to embed and foster cultural safety and equity in all that we do.

The ADA Indigenous Strategy not only outlines a blueprint for Indigenous determination and empowerment in the faculty, it also sets the high expectations and guidance for working with First Nations staff, students, communities and organisations through research, education, and collaborative community engagement.

UNSW Indigenous Strategy

The ADA Indigenous Strategy has been written in response to the UNSW Indigenous Strategy*. The objectives of our ADA Indigenous Strategy align directly with the Three Pillars of the UNSW Indigenous Strategy: Culture and Country, Give Back, and Grow Our Own. The ADA Indigenous Strategy will integrate the three pillars of the UNSW Indigenous Strategy as a part of our core business.



Culture and Country

Make our campus welcoming physically and culturally, so Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff can be supported, valued and be in a position to thrive.

Increase the presence of Aboriginal culture and practice on campus. Including celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures throughout the year and not just for NAIDOC Week.

Nurture a sense of understanding, awareness and respect for the cultural footprint of UNSW's campuses.



Give Back

Develop a culture of civic responsibility in our students; instil them with a service-minded ambition to give back to their communities.

Encourage staff and senior students (and Alumni) to volunteer to assist with UNSW Indigenous outreach, Pre-Programs, Enabling Programs and other Indigenous university programs.

Instil the 'Give Back ethos' from pre-programs all the way to postgraduate levels to ensure that all aspects of life at UNSW are grounded by this principle.

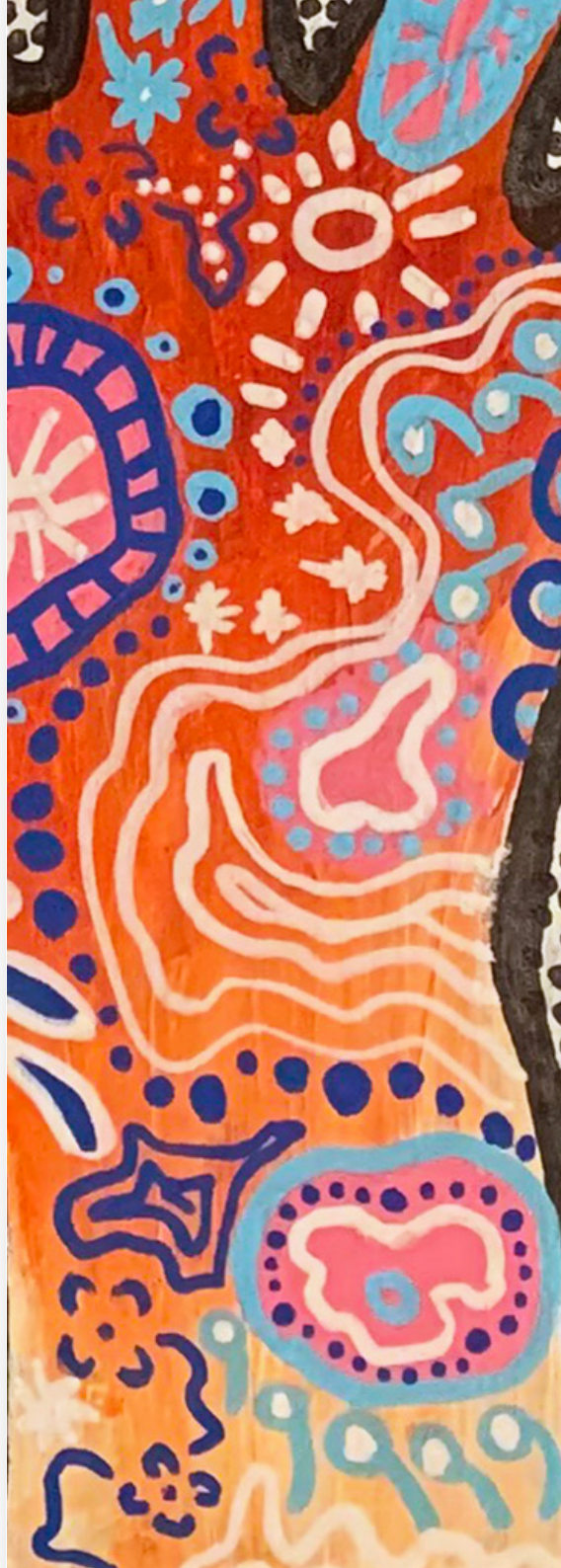


Grow our Own

Encourage our students to strive for excellence and pursue postgraduate study.

Create a pipeline to careers in academia and research.

Foster resilience in our Indigenous students and develop their critical thinking skills, through providing a campus that is alive with ideas, debate and discussion of the most challenging issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across the country.



Indigenous Student Voice

The following section was contributed by First Nations ADA Students:

ADA prioritises the wellbeing and experiences of students at the front and centre of our faculty. We are committed to facilitating the space and platform for First Nations students to have a voice in the faculty where their needs, concerns, and perspectives are respected and endorsed.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in ADA will be supported by a team of First Nations ADA faculty staff members, including the Associate Dean Indigenous, and will have a direct line of communication to the ADA Dean.

In 2020, Winangala Gurrugurrubaa - the Dean's Indigenous Student Shadow Board - was founded to ensure that there is an embedded and lasting platform for First Nations students' voices to be heard.

Winangala Gurrugurrubaa ('a place and time of very deep listening') aims to provide a culturally safe space, and empowered voice, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students on their journey within ADA.

The creation of Winangala Gurrugurrubaa was a student-led response to a shared experience of racism, colonial academic practice, and voicelessness. Since its inception, Winangala Gurrugurrubaa has established three priority areas to guide its work within ADA:

1. Support, care for and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in a culturally safe educational environment while studying;
2. Provide the faculty with strategic advice and proposals that address the concerns of current and future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
3. Respond to requests from the faculty and staff on matters relevant to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student body within ADA.

Winangala Gurrugurrubaa is essential for First Nations students to have a voice in the ways that the Faculty of ADA relate to, engage with, and speak about us. We are fundamental to student engagement and cultural safety within the faculty.

Guiding Principles for Winangala Gurrugurrubaa

- Respect and care for each other.
- Listen with open ears and an open heart.
- Speak truthfully, with kindness and curiosity.
- Build safe and secure spaces for all mob.
- Always be accountable to our Elders, communities and families.
- Centre our culture and Old Ways in everything we do.
- Strive towards empowered First Nations' futures.

Our ADA Indigenous Strategic Objectives

The ADA Indigenous Strategy comprises of four interrelated key focus areas of Research, Education, Engagement, and Employment, which will frame our strategic objectives

ADA Indigenous Strategy Objectives- Research	UNSW Indigenous Strategy Pillars		
	Culture and Country	Give back	Grow our Own
Undertake research that meets the needs and priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities locally and beyond	○	○	
All research students and academic staff understand the significance of Indigenous research principles, ethics, and methodologies	○	○	
To provide a safe and supportive environment where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students can pursue higher degree research			○
To provide a safe and supportive environment where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers can thrive in their work			○

ADA Indigenous Strategy Objectives- Education	UNSW Indigenous Strategy Pillars		
	Culture and Country	Give back	Grow our Own
Prioritise Indigenous voices and representation to build the faculty's collective understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, lands, languages, and cultures	○	○	
To provide a safe and supportive place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators to teach	○		○
To provide a safe and supportive environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to learn	○		○
To shape students who reflect and engage deeply with (1) a process of unlearning and relearning (decolonising), and (2) Indigenous knowledges and perspectives	○	○	○



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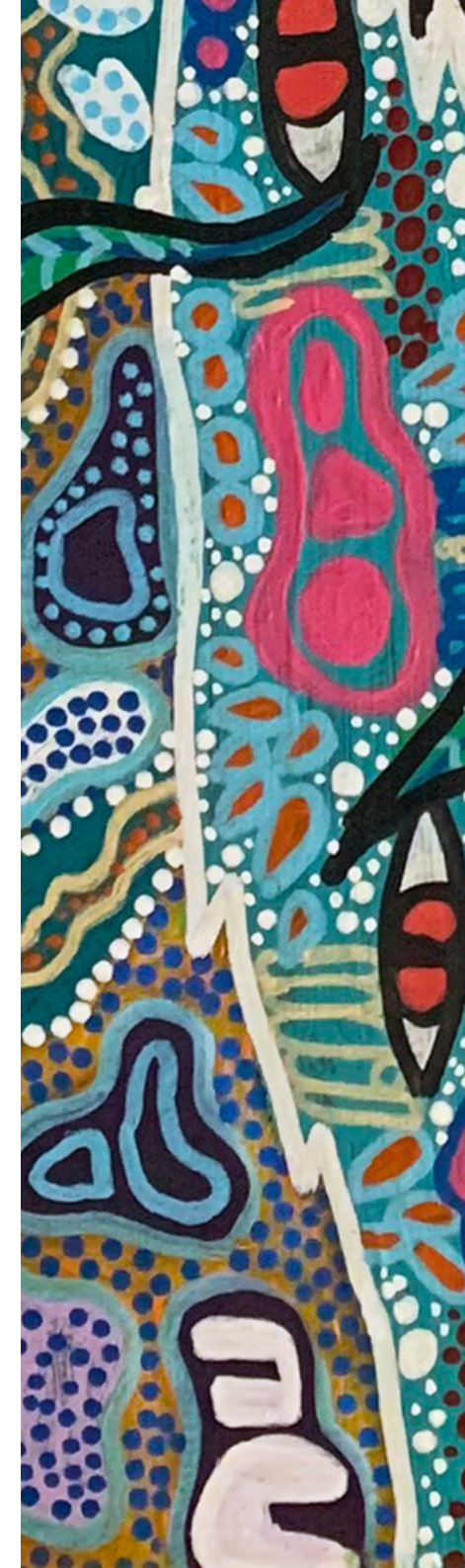
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ADA Indigenous Strategy Objectives- Employment	UNSW Indigenous Strategy Pillars		
	Culture and Country	Give back	Grow our Own
To build our professional and academic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce	○		○
To appoint Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics in senior roles (levels D & E), including the faculty's Leadership Team (Associate Dean Indigenous)	○		○
To provide clear career development pathways, opportunities and mentoring for early and mid-career Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics (levels A, B & C)	○		○
To provide clear career development pathways, opportunities and mentoring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professional staff members	○		○

ADA Indigenous Strategy Objectives- Engagement	UNSW Indigenous Strategy Pillars		
	Culture and Country	Give back	Grow our Own
Establish an overarching Engagement Framework* that (1) supports the engagement aspects of objectives across all focus areas (2) guides ADA in culturally safe and respectful engagement with Aboriginal people and communities (3) Maps a practical and long-term commitment of support to the educational, social, linguistic and cultural aspirations of local Aboriginal people and communities through ongoing two-way partnerships	○	○	○

*The Engagement Framework will underpin and sit across all the focus areas.



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Our ultimate goal, is to embed the ADA Indigenous Strategy into all faculty business. To do this, we will develop Implementation Plans to meet the objectives across the four focus areas of Research, Education, Employment, and Engagement. These Implementation Plans will set out the initiatives and actions over the next five years to meet our objectives and embed the Indigenous Strategy into UNSW Arts, Design & Architecture, ensuring its long-term commitment and sustainability.