Recognition

Aunty Delsie, pictured above, a Gunditjmara woman from south-west Victoria who works as an Indigenous Education Officer with the Catholic Education Office in Melbourne, is deeply involved in Indigenous education from pre-primary to tertiary level.

"This is a wonderful recognition of all that Aunty Delsie does and I offer my warm congratulations to her on this award," said Vice-Chancellor Professor Greg Craven.

Inspiring resources

Staff and students of the University's Victorian Indigenous Unit, Jim-baa-yer, know Aunty Delsie as an inspiring and committed mentor, actively involved in University and community events.

Aunty Delsie is responsible for the professional development of Koorie Education Workers within Catholic schools, and is a member of numerous government and educational boards, committees and advisory groups throughout the Victorian Aboriginal community.

The development of resources such as the Yarra Healing Website and literacy resources including the Dancing in the Dust DVD and the Guiding Tracks literacy resource have been part of Aunty Delsie’s commitment to Indigenous education.

Aunty Delsie, mother of six and grandmother of six, is committed to encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly young people, into all areas of education.

Aunty Delsie shares her views on:

The importance of education for Indigenous and all Australians

Education is the key to informing all learners, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, about life. It is the vehicle by which all students gain knowledge to help their own understanding about the intricate details of how this world works.

For Indigenous students, education helps us to find that level playing field so that we can become part of that “game” of life. Our contribution to this country’s reality began long before 1788 and it is important for all Australians to learn about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 60,000 plus years’ worth of story, and its place in Australia’s modern history.

The Indigenous story of this country is an integral part of Australia’s history. The sharing of knowledge creates awareness that assists in breaking down barriers and forging ties that are based on trust and respect.

Her experiences as an ACU National student

It is an interesting journey from two perspectives, that of a mature-aged learner and that of an Indigenous learner. I am learning not only from my lecturers and tutors, but also from my fellow students. They have taught me a thing or two about what drives the younger generation, and as one who works in education, those little discoveries have proven quite valuable in my line of work.

My re-adjustment to a classroom setting with young people is made easier by my rapport with and support from Jim-baa-yer’s Indigenous Co-ordinator Naomi Wolfe and my fellow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at the Melbourne Campus.

Receiving the Elder’s Award from the Federal Government

The Elder’s Award from the Federal Government and the nomination from ACU National is a great acknowledgement from both about the important role of elders in Indigenous communities, and in this particular case, the role elders contribute to the life and learning of students in tertiary institutions.

Respect for our elders is definitive. My elders – my nan, mum, uncles and aunties – were my role models and this award is one I accepted on their behalf.

Their mentorship of me began from the time I was old enough to understand the difference between right and wrong. In observation of their very actions I learnt humility of self but pride of people.

My elders passed on to me leadership, decision-making and mediation skills. They instilled in me a strong sense of justice for all and they taught me how to care, provide for and nurture family and community.

If the elders saw something that needed to be done, they just did it. I am where I am today because of my elders and their guidance, support, encouragement and unconditional and unfailing love. I received the award but it was my elders who did all the hard work and for that, I thank them all.

DANCING IN THE DUST

Part-time Melbourne Campus education student Aunty Delsie Lillyst has been awarded a 2008 Indigenous Elder Award from the Higher Education Advisory Council for her lifelong contribution to Indigenous people in higher education.