

Raising Indigenous Voices in Academia and Society

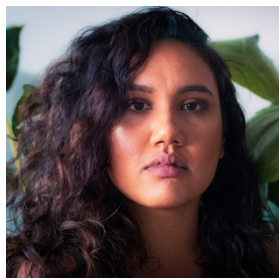
About the Speakers



Dr Cara Cross is a proud Worimi and Biripai woman, academic, author, and senior leader in higher education. She works from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Division at UNSW, where she helps drive strategic change that centres Indigenous self-determination, knowledge systems, and cultural authority within the university sector. Following the 2023 Voice Referendum, Cara led the development of UNSW's historic Micro-Treaty—one of the first of its kind in Australia—laying the groundwork for formal agreements between universities and Indigenous communities. A First Nations historian and the First Nations General Councillor for the History Council of NSW, Cara has chaired statewide events focused on truth-telling, Aboriginal-led research, Indigenous knowledge systems and the future of history in Australia. Her doctoral work, 'Our Country, Our Healer', explored the Aboriginal pharmacopoeia and sacred sites, earning acclaim for its contribution to Indigenous scholarship. As a Senior Atlantic Fellow for Social Equity, she is focused on the repatriation of cultural knowledges and the development of cultural curricula. Cara is currently writing her first book with Magabala Books, and is deeply committed to Indigenous education, cultural resurgence, and social change.



Ross Freeman is a student in the Human Language Technology (HLT) Masters of Science graduate program at the University of Arizona. Ross's research intersects the development of language technologies with Indigenous communities who seek technological development of their language. Currently, He enables others to create indigenous language specific keyboards and workshops with Indigenous people around Phoenix & Tucson, AZ on how one can modify technology for specific language needs. Ross graduated summa cum laude from the University of Arizona in 2020 through the Honors College with a B.A. in linguistics, a B.F.A. in dance, and was elected Phi Beta Kappa. Ross went on to dance professionally for three years as a full time company dancer with Boulder Ballet before returning to UArizona's linguistics department. Ross's interests are primarily in computational linguistics but extend to language revitalization and second language acquisition as well, as learning language through immersion and embracing culture is at the core.



Rebekah Hatfield is a dynamic communicator, artist, and cultural leader dedicated to empowering communities through storytelling, collaboration, and Indigenous knowledge. A proud Bundjalung, Darumbal, and Wiradjuri woman, Bek brings a deep commitment to revitalising First Nations culture, language, and governance. With an educational background in Media (Journalism & Communications) and Documentary Filmmaking, Bek combines creative vision with real-world impact—working with communities to share their stories, understand our roles and make decisions together. Her work spans sectors including education, law, and not-for-profits, and she now consults nationally, bringing cultural integrity and strategic insight to every project. Bek's creative practice is expressed primarily in weaving and visual arts, which she often share's through workshop facilitation. Whether through art, advocacy, or engagement—Bek's vision is to shape a stronger, more connected future for our communities.of his passion for linguistics..

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Atalanta Lloyd-Haynes is a Gumbaynggirr community member and scholar by way of Eora nations - Kogerah-Gadigal (Rushcutters Bay-Paddington), Dharug (Penrith), Darkinjung, Gomeroi. Miimi.ga First daughter of my father's people. Younger daughter of my mother's people. Educated with Gnibi mob (Southern Cross University) 2017-2021, BIndigK with Honours.



Howard Higgs' story doesn't fit into a 'unit of competency' equivalents. He has experience in the western systems of knowledge through a, B.Mus.Ed, B.Ed, M.Ed.Admin (UNSW), MIM (UTS) Cert IV TAE40116, TAEASS502 (TAFENSW) and now a PhD (UTS). In addition to this, He has more than three decades of experience working in the NSW public school factory systems, more recently at a tertiary level through TAFE NSW, with much of this time spent teaching Gumbaynggirr students on Gumbaynggirr Country. Therefore, he has first-hand, detailed experience in observing failed systems of Aboriginal Education, or what better should be understood as, 'Indigenous Knowledge Realisation'. All his experience points to the lack of recognition and understanding of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and the imperative requirement of learning on, from and directly, with Country in more than a superficial or tokenistic way. Jiiginy Miindala, my Gumbaynggirr practise in collaboration with his PhD candidature at UTS, is an attempt to reconcile better ways of understanding how Indigenous Knowledge Systems work and have worked through his personal experience of Aboriginal self-determination through Place within Country.



Zana Jabir is a Gumbaynggirr, Dhanggati, Kamilaroi (ab)original and Moroccan woman. She is a PhD candidate at The University of Sydney and an Associate Lecturer in Secondary Education at Western Sydney University. With a background in English Literature and Secondary Teaching, Zana's research focuses on Indigenous Imagination Pedagogies within the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME). Grounded in Indigenous research methodologies and systems thinking, her work aims to revitalise imagination in education to transform inequity. She brings experience as a teacher, mentor, researcher, and community member, with a commitment to relational, culturally responsive educational practices.

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Dr. Raymond Kelly is the Deputy Head of The Wollotuka Institute for Indigenous Engagement and Advancement at the University of Newcastle. As a Dhangatti and Gumbayngirr speaker, his research is centered on the recognition and revival of Indigenous languages. Through his collaborative language research with multiple Indigenous communities across Australia, he has been able to make vital connections between different Aboriginal languages as part of his revitalisation work. In 2020 he launched an innovative language program, 'Muuya Banggi', or 'flying breath' that brings together community language learners for shared language exploration, discussion and practice. Kelly has been integral in advising on language and his expertise is sought as a consultant for community and school language programs. He has been instrumental in helping build relationships between communities and government, and he has been called on to offer his advice on language policy and legislation. As a respected language researcher, speaker, performer, and knowledge-holder, Ray is known for centering an Indigenous strengths-based approach in his ongoing contribution to Indigenous Language Ecologies.



Mililma May is a Kulumbirigin Danggalaba Tiwi woman from the Batcho family, the knowledge holders of Gulumoerrgin (Darwin). She is a grassroots organiser, storyteller, and advocate for land, truth, and justice. Mililma's work is deeply grounded in her family's intergenerational resistance to the ongoing colonisation of Larrakia Country; particularly through the battles to protect Lee Point (Binybara) and Middle Arm from destructive development. Working alongside her family and community, she has played a leading role in challenging government and corporate interests that continue to ignore Aboriginal land rights, desecrate sacred sites, and erase the histories of the true custodians of Gulumoerrgin. Mililma's activism bridges grassroots protest, public education, and cultural reclamation. She works to ensure that the stories of the Danggalaba clan; especially the Batcho line, are not just remembered, but recognised and honoured. Her presentation, "Gulumoerrgin and the Resistance of Danggalaba", shares the truth of her family's legacy, confronts the systemic erasure embedded in Darwin's foundation, and calls for justice, and recognition of the rightful custodians whose resistance has never ceased.



Andrew McNair is a citizen of the Chickasaw Nation, a federally-recognized tribe located in south-central Oklahoma in the United States. He is a PhD student in linguistics with a concentration in language revitalization at the University of Arizona on the traditional lands of the Tohono O'odham and Pascua Yaqui peoples. Andrew previously completed coursework for his MA in Native American Languages and Linguistics (thesis in progress) at the University of Arizona. His primary research focuses on the intersection of switch-reference and discourse marking in Chikashshanompa' (the Chickasaw language), an area with almost no previous research. The goal of his work is to inform the pedagogies of our adult language immersion school, which just graduated its first cohort of conversational L2 speakers. Andrew is also a contractor with his tribe's language department, where he transcribe oral narratives in Chikashshanompa' and assist with translation of these narratives, work with elder speakers, annotate our corpus of language materials, and help put on community language events when he is back home.

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Phillip Orcher has experienced a career working across health, education, and digital engagement, contributing to projects and publications focused on Aboriginal health, clinical redesign, and ethics. He is a graduate of the University of Tasmania's Clinical Redesign program, and continues to focus on work creating culturally strong, community-driven frameworks that honour his Aboriginal people and their futures.



Shay Sullivan holds a Bachelor degree in linguistics from the University of Montana (UM), accompanied by a post-secondary certificate in language rejuvenation and maintenance, and a Master's degree in linguistics at the University of Colorado, Boulder (CU). She is currently a Doctoral student in linguistics at the University of Arizona. Shay has been mentored extensively by Dr. Neyooxet Greymorning, the developer of Accelerated Second Language Acquisition (ASLA) and has assisted him with eight language teacher training workshops in ASLA in several communities in Alaska, Canada, Germany and the USA, as well as Australia. Shay is primarily interested in the strategies that communities employ to revitalize their heritage language, specifically language-teaching strategies and how these can be improved. Additionally, her interests lie with engaging linguists in her field to be more directly involved in language revitalization efforts, in a positive and productive way.

Birrugan Dunn-Velasco is a Gumbaynggirr language teacher and community organiser based in the Nambucca Valley. He works across education, cultural revitalisation, and grassroots advocacy to support the strength and future of his people. Birrugan currently coordinates the Gumbaynggirr Language and Culture Nest (AECG) and is the founder of Bulagan Ltd, a growing initiative focused on language transmission and youth development within the Nambucca Valley. Birrugan is an emerging practitioner of Aboriginal Second Language Acquisition (ASLA), and is committed to finding practical, culturally-informed ways to make as many language speakers and teachers as possible.

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Jacqueline Williams has 30 years applied research in Natural Resource Management (NRM) in Australia having worked at local, regional, state and national levels in a variety of capacities including community NGOs, Local/State Government and research organisations. She is currently an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Science Engineering at Southern Cross University with her research on regenerative, sustainable agriculture in the grain industry.



Rod Williams is a PhD Candidate at the School of Business, University of Queensland. A Bundjalung man (NSW) who has pursued a private sector career that extends across the industrial relations, financial, mining, small business, not for profit and university sectors. Founding Director and Owner of Gongon Consultancy Pty Ltd (1993) developing the Gongon Cultural and Spiritual Paradigm which provides a cultural interface framework between western and Indigenous knowledge systems of the Community, Government and the Private Sector. The Gongon Models and Frameworks place emphasis on integrating Indigenous cultural values with contemporary business and governance practices reflects a holistic approach that bridges cultural knowledge systems with practical management strategies.

LATE REGISTRANTS

Zana Jabir's co-presenter



Stephani Beck is a Wongatha Ngadju woman from Western Australia and the current Vice Chancellor of IMAGI-NATION {University}. Steph is currently playing a lead role in shepherding the IMAGI-NATION Platform and shepherding a variety of research projects. She is an artist and a custodian of knowledge who serves as a translator to the Professors, the systems change projects and toolmakers within the network. Steph's core focus is exploring avenues to centre Indigenous systems thinking in all aspects of design, development and implementation through impact and storytelling.