

2022 NAOMI WILLIAMS WIRADJURI POETRY PRIZE

The Naomi Williams Wiradjuri Poetry Prize is named in honour of Nay who was a strong, proud Wiradjuri woman from the Brungle/Tumut area of NSW.

Nay loved to write poetry about the Tumut river, her family and all the elements of love that she treasured.

This poetry prize aims to support other Wiradjuri writers and encourage more poetry about life on Wiradjuri Country.



I wish to begin by sharing my love and paying my respect to all my Elders past and present, right across this beautiful land. May my ancestors continue to guide and walk on life's path with me.

It is my pleasure to present this collection of poems from the winners and highly commended in the Naomi Williams Wiradjuri Poetry Prize (NWWPP) 2020, 2021 and 2022.

The NWWPP was started in 2020, in memory of my only daughter, Naomi Jane Williams, a proud, young Wiradjuri woman.

I want to sincerely thank and congratulate all the winners, highly commended and everyone who has entered a poem in the last three years. I encourage you all to keep writing and sharing your Wiradjuri stories. Your poems have all be heart-warming and inspiring.

I hope you all enjoy reading these beautiful poems and stories as much as I have.

With much love and respect,
Sharon Williams

A SPECIAL THANKS

Anita Heiss, Rachel Bin Salleh, Auntie Chery Penrith, Amy Williams, the Kilby/Penrith family, Auntie Caroline Hughes and the Yurauna Centre at CIT, the Bond-Williams family, George Newhouse and the National Justice Project.

Katy Tyrrell, we are extremely grateful for all of your hard work and commitment to this project. You are absolutely amazing.

To all of our family, friends and community we thank you for your continued love and encouragement by supporting this lovely legacy in memory of our beautiful Nay. We love you and miss you Nay and not a day goes by that you aren't in my thoughts.

2022 PRIZE

In 2022, the judges were particularly impressed with the number and quality of the poems submitted for the Kids category, which spoke most strongly to the theme of Respect, Recognition and Reconciliation. Therefore, they decided to select the three prize winners from this category (meaning there were no winners from the Youth and Adult category for 2022).

We acknowledge that we live and work on the lands of First Nations Peoples, and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

This land is, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

YINDYAMARRA

by Katara Dempsey-Penrith
from Brungle Public School

Give your kindness to everyone,
Kind to the land,
Kind to the animals,
Kind to the Elders,
Kind to your mob.

Make sure you listen to everyone,
Listen to the stories,
Listen to the sounds outside,
Listen to the music
Listen to your mob

Show love to the world,
Love your family,
Love what you do,
Love with your heart
Love to your mob.

Respect.
Yindyamarra.

MY NGURAMBANG

by Skye Burnes from Brungle Public School

On my ngurambang
there is always caring.
In our community,
we are always sharing.

On my ngurambang,
knowledge is strong
It comes from our elders,
Listen along.

On my ngurambang,
We dance and sing
working together,
always growing.

On my ngurambang,
People are kind,
Look after the land
We are all combined.

I BELONG HERE - THE RIVER

by Bailey McRae from Wagga Wagga Public School

A wonderful place as I slowly drift down the
murrumbidgee river.

Slowly by slowly I start to hear swallows singing,
cod swimming, the songs wrapping around and around
my ears.

My feelings tell me I belong as I walk down,
my feet slipping into the cold sand.

All my feelings combined into one heart warming
feeling. I belong here

TAKE MY LIFE

by Mitchell W. Hibbens

Take my life.

But it's not yours to take,
I belong to this place.
I am bila, I am wir, I am earth.

Take my life, it belongs to them.
These veins hold the stories of a thousand generations.
A river of song, culture & pride.
Clever people, warriors. Wiradjuri.

Each breath taken is a memory.
They fought so we could speak.
Tales of Nimbo, Mudjarn, Brungle Creek.
That long held fear of travel at night,
Those mission stories from our Elders,
galvanise our fight.

For it is they to whom I belong.
Not you and your skyscraper nightmares,
ghoulish monstrosities.
It is story, it is family... it is ngurum-bang.
That hold me.

Take my life...and I am forever here.
Returned once more to the place, to my people,
who have been here for eternity.

MIYAGAN DHULUBANG (FAMILY SPIRIT)

by Linda Augusto

It is there in our place in the park,
Memories, footprints, imprints,
Deep and strong,
Like tree roots that spread and twist,
Been there for so long.

A space where many generations
gathered but never met,
Our stories shared.
A familiar place,
Even when we haven't visited before.

It's our place.
Spirits spread across time, It's intertwined
Deep in the earth,
Recognition felt without knowing why.

Stories later making sense,
This is where we all came from far and wide,
Our meeting place.

Our imprint is seared into the earth,
It is the spirit of generations.

I AM THE RIVER AND THE RIVER IS ME

by Mahlie Ingram, age 11

I am the River and the River is me.

The Murrumbidgee flows free,
It's the place you need to be,
A place to sit and be calm,
Or even swing from a tree,

I am the River and the River is me

A place I can play,
A place I can feel
A place where I can heal

I am the River and the River is me

Fresh water splashing my skin
The sand blowing with the wind
The trees sound as they are speaking to me I know I'm
right where I need to be

THE RIVER AND ME

by Jack Burnes, age 11

Fishing is the best.

Fishing with my family is great.

We catch trout, cod and lots more it's great.

The river makes me feel safe, the rocks tumbling, trees swaying and the river flowing.

These are the things I love about the river.

FAMILY

by Kobe Burnes, age 9

I love my family

My family is fun to play with

My brother plays with me in the paddock

I play with my cousins in the paddock

I respect my family's culture

In my family there is laughter

My family looks like five

There are three boys and two girls

My family keeps me safe

I visit my pop

Because we love him

MARRAMBIDYA

by Greg Pritchard

like a snake in sand
it lies across my landscape
brown, sinuous and lean

a badly coiled hose
that when laid out again,
refuses to lay straight
the water pushing it where it will go

in summer
the soft chocolate coloured water
holds me like a lover

and like a street full of beautiful lights
the air is full with swallows
and honey eaters

the gnarled old gums reach over me
as if to keep me safe and sane
their roots a weave of branches
at the water's edge

THE LACHLAN RIVER

by Stevie Maher

The Lachlan River
love fishing with my family
Wraps around my home

2020 OPEN HIGHLY COMMENDED

WIRADJURI YINAA

by Jasmine Williams

As I sit on the banks of the Marrambidya Bila,
I listen to the guguburra sing.

With my feet in the sand, my mob by my side
I still feel as though I'm missing something.

My Mother, the Land has fought to survive, Amongst the
greed and the hatred, years after Genocide.

Wiradjuri and proud, my culture is my history.

I can see in my mind those beautiful ceremonies and
healing traditions, I wonder why today we are still told
it's a mystery.

The Gugaa, my protector, so fierce in many ways,
A survivor of our spirit in my times of need,

He never turns his back on me, forever with me he
stays. The bond we have with our land cannot be
explained,

Like a mother to her children, the connections remain
the same.

From the wildlife to the waterholes, the trees,
the sand and the stars,
This is my mother I feel her in my heart.

As I close my eyes and vision my people and their ways,
All I can hope for my children is to have a better start.

We need to bring back ceremony for our lore and our
land, to help those who are willing to respect it and
understand.

We are the Wiradjuri people and we are proud of it.

No matter what obstacles may lie in our path, Respect
to my ancestors who always stay above it.

NGADHUGUYUNGANBUL MURUNGIDYAL

by Alison Barnes

Every time I make a healthy choice
Every time I respect my own boundaries
Every time I make me a priority

I can feel my ancestors

Wrapping me in their arms
Giving thanks
Whispering words of encouragement

I can't fix the past

But

I can heal myself
I can break the cycle I can heal my family
I can take back what was stolen

In learning

To love myself
To be a little kinder
To be a little more forgiving
To show a little more compassion

I can heal myself
I can heal Country

MY MUM IS BLACK I AM NOT

by Aryssa McAlister

My mum is black I am not.

She loves her Devon, she likes it hot, but a burnt piece of Devon, id prefer not.

My mum is black I am not.

Her steak has to be dead, but mine does not. she likes no blood, no red, not even just a spot.

My mum is black I am not.

She has those tiny ankles, the black gin ankles, the ones that I haven't got.

My mum is black I am not.

She says things like "eeya" or "look out" more than I would say, but she says them quiet a lot.

My mum is black I am not.

She gave me my name, but more often then not, calls me mum or Daught.

My mum is black I am not.

We both have Wiradjuri blood and we are both from this country but when I tell someone I'm Aboriginal, they tell me I am not.

I love my mum and I love her a lot but there is one big difference between me and my mum, her skin is black and mine is not.

HEALING OUR CULTURE

by Ngali Williams

As we grow, we know we are not alone,
We stand together as one

We own our identity, we are who we are,
We mourn, we heal, we elevate

Though we still hurt, our mob is still standing strong

Our land has been bruised, has suffered great loss and
deep wounds Because of the work our ancestors have
done in the past to heal our land It is now up to us as
young indigenous people to protect our culture

We need to keep our culture alive

To acknowledge the battles that our ancestors have
fought for us It is now time to move forward,
all together, for future generations
To be able to follow in our ancestors footsteps

In order to heal ourselves and our land

HEAL OUR COUNTRY

by Rikki Penrith

Aboriginal people need hydration,
You are putting us in frustration.

Caregivers don't give pollution.
We need a revolution.

We use our ochre,
We don't play poker.

Try to make a change,
the way you do life is strange.

There shouldn't be stations.
Let us heal our nations.

Stop burning our trees,
sit down and feel the breeze

WIINYUGAMIN (BUSHFIRE)

by Jack Burns

Catastrophic bushfires
Burning out of control
Destroying my memories
Hurting my soul

Our sacred places
Turned to ash
Lost forever
Made into trash

Birds dropping
Out of the sky
Suffocating, dying
Makes me cry

Time to change
Our animals need saving
To stop these bushfires burning and raging

Cultural burning is the only way
To save the land scape
From death and decay

CONNECTION

by Lily Sampson

I'm the river, the valley and the sea,
My creations are rich and full of worth,
I see, smell and hear the delicate living world,
For I am elegant, Mother Earth.

I shall be greatly cherished,
If one acts upon the protection of me,
I then supply truly unique gifts,
The people feel delightfully free.

Flowing throughout Mother Earth,
I am a serene resource,
A home where creation can sprout,
For I am water, simply a luxurious recourse.

For I am the connection towards human and Mother
Earth, My texture runs throughout their body,
I am a contribution that they shall take for granted,
Mother Earth sets an example we should embody.

I am the intelligent, athletic, tradition,
I act and take what I require,
The water of tranquillity flows within me,
As a person of Mother Earth, I succeed to aspire.

I present the culture and yindyamarra to her,
Water from my community flows throughout me,
It forms connection between the land and I,
My spirited heart belongs to Mother Earth, thee.

Congratulations to all the talented poets who have won the Naomi Williams Wiradjuri Poetry Prize in 2020, 2021 and 2022, your words have touched our hearts.

We would like to thank all entrants who have submitted your poetry and shared your words with us.

We also say thank you to the prize judges: Aunty Sharon Williams, Aunty Cheryl Penrith, Anita Heiss, Amy Williams, and George Newhouse.

We also acknowledge the sponsors whose generosity has made the Naomi Williams Wiradjuri Poetry Prize possible. They are:

- **The Kilby/Penrith Family**
- **Aunty Caroline Hughes**
- **The Heiss Family**
- **The Bond-Williams Family**
- **The National Justice Project**

If you would like to speak more about the Naomi Williams Wiradjuri Poetry Prize, please contact us at:

poetry@justice.org.au or

call the National Justice Project on (02) 9514 4440.