

NAIDOC NATIONAL AWARDS SPEECH by Mark Bin Bakar, 2007

I would like to acknowledge that I stand here on Larrakia Country.

I dedicate this award to my Mother, Phyllis and my Father Amat, my lovely wife, Tania and my two sons Jason and Lindsay . They have been major supporters and the inspiration in keeping me moving along. I would also like to acknowledge my brothers and sisters and the many extended family members who have always stood silently (and sometimes vocally) behind me. I am happy and proud to win this very prestigious award for all of them.

My wife has been my rock, for me to stand tall on. Without her, I would not have been so lucky. As an Aboriginal woman, she has also carried many burdens, as a wife, friend, mother, daughter, sister. Combined between us, we know the negative issues that effect Aboriginal people, and I mean everything; because we have also been affected by these things. I honour Tania in receiving this award.

I also acknowledge the many people who have supported me over the years; those who have believed in what I am doing for the common good of our Indigenous community, and also our broader community. There are too many to mention, but you know who you are.

It is an absolute honour to win this National NAIDOC award, as it indicates the recognition of my contribution, to our Indigenous community, on a holistic level, by my peers throughout Australia and, within the National NAIDOC committee.

It is an emotional historical period, not only in my life, but on a national level, to win this award when we are also celebrating and acknowledging the 40 year anniversary of Referendum; the 50th Years of NAIDOC, and the 10th anniversary of the Bringing Home Report. It is an honour to receive Indigenous peoples' recognition, and it is truly humbling.

This award bestowed on me is a great award; to be given this award in this era of our peoples struggle, and continued suffering, is very moving for me. While there are prominent dates in our history and journey as Indigenous peoples, for me this day will go down in history for this unique reason .

"Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe" - H.G.Wells

All the stars are aligned, my Liarn is very strong, and my belief in making a positive change, and contribution, to a united Australia that embraces our Indigenous community, is my ultimate goal.

The journey to this point in my life has been hard, painful and testing. At times I have almost succumbed to surrender, to give up. Being an Aboriginal person placed in a middle position between our mob and main stream Australia has at times been very difficult. Despite all these obstacles; the passion, commitment and pride of my people always carry me through.

Our people, our community and our representatives are always tested by many hidden agendas along with people who wish to prosper on our suffering and our struggles. We must stand united, the Indigenous peoples of Australia and the many good spirited caring Non-indigenous peoples who believe in our struggle.

We can create a great change for our people, and I mean as Australians as a whole, to claim, own, respect and empower our Indigenous people, for the greater betterment of our nation. This can be achieved by truth and reconciliation, and most importantly, the healing of our people through an apology by the nation.

The Government has failed to acknowledge the pain, our Indigenous peoples have suffered since colonisation and still continue to suffer to this day .

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" - George Santavana
Noted American Philosopher

The original destruction of functioning communities was achieved precisely through the kind of intervention we are seeing unfold in the Territory. It failed the first time and it is unlikely that a second dose will cure it.

We must not just think about what things will be like in one or two years time; but what they will be like in fifteen years time. Or in thirty years time, or even fifty years time.

I believe that one important clue is that we need to work towards re-establishing Aboriginal values. There needs to be an up to date expression of Aboriginal values that notes their context within modern Australian society. This is critical in the process of re-building shattered communities.

I love my country, and I love the special aspect when my people, and non Aboriginal people, can come together and share a common space, environment and community. When this happens, a great spirit is working in bringing us together. Some people may accuse the almighty living God, others may accuse the great spirit world, others would just say, that's life. But I believe greatness is at work, and can only reach its fruition when the Human Spirit has the drive to be free of all fears, pain and blame. We need to accept responsibility, and share, in the greatest gift given to us, me and you, and that is Life.

Our people's biggest weakness and fault, is we trust, and we forgive. History has proven that this has left us vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, depression, oppression and finally social dysfunction. "Our lives begin to end, the day we become silent about things that matter" - Martin Luther King

However this is not everywhere, and not everyone has these extreme negative effects on their lives, many have strived, became leaders to our young, and to our families. I am so proud to have won this award. I have stood up for over twenty years of my life trying to make a difference for our mob, to create opportunities for our young and old to prosper; to create a strong sense of pride, in all our communities. The driving force has been my connection to countrymen, country, people and listening to our old people. I have a vision for a greater united Indigenous community.

For there to be reconciliation between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people there first has to be reconciliation between all Indigenous peoples.

I have had so many obstacles thrown in my path over the years, but I continued on my path, as no greater belief has carried me, then the belief of my ancestors, (both living and deceased), who had no choice, no recognition, but paid the ultimate price, since colonisation.

This drive cannot really be understood by non-Indigenous people, because we are, and have, a oneness within ourselves. They cannot understand the relationship we have to country, place of origin, kin and connection to each other. Mind you, some have linked in due to their commitment, dedication and acceptance of our people's uniqueness. This is a good thing and we encourage this to continue.

The inner spirit that gives Indigenous women the strength in the heart, the strength in the mind, and the passing on of spiritual strength, is what inspired me in my unique artistic career path. I owe it to Indigenous women, especially Stolen Generation women, women who have

lost children, women who keep us together, and elderly women, for their wisdom within our community. They are the rock of our existence. Quote: "Knowledge speaks, but wisdom listens" Jimi Hendrix.

So, in finishing off , I humbly receive this award with great honour, and recognition of those who have gone before me. I hope that it will further assist me in contributing to a change in this country, playing a positive advocacy role for the betterment of our people, and most importantly for our country.

I am proud to be a member of the oldest living culture in the world.

WHADDAYOW!!

Mark Bin Bakar, 2007