

REFLECT Reconciliation Action Plan

ARAPILES COMMUNITY THEATRE (ACT NATIMUK)
NOVEMBER, 2022 - NOVEMBER, 2023



ACTNATIMUK

ACT Natimuk acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land upon which we are located, the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawajali, Jupagalk and Wergaia and all the lands on which we meet and work.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge their sacred connection to land, water, sky and community.

A message from Reconciliation Australia CEO

Karen Mundine

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, RECONCILIATION AUSTRALIA



Reconciliation Australia welcomes the Arapiles Community Theatre (ACT) Natimuk to the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program with the formal endorsement of its inaugural Reflect RAP.

ACT Natimuk joins a network of more than 2,200 corporate, government, and not-for-profit organisations that have made a formal commitment to reconciliation through the RAP program.

Since 2006, RAPs have provided a framework for organisations to leverage their structures and diverse spheres of influence to support the national reconciliation movement. The program's potential for impact is greater than ever, with close to 3 million people now working or studying in an organisation with a RAP.

The four RAP types – Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate – allow RAP partners to continuously develop and strengthen reconciliation commitments in new ways. This Reflect RAP will lay the foundations, priming the workplace for future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives.

The RAP program's strength is its framework of relationships, respect, and opportunities, allowing an organisation to

strategically set its reconciliation commitments in line with its own business objectives, for the most effective outcomes.

These outcomes contribute towards the five dimensions of reconciliation: race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance.

It is critical to not only uphold all five dimensions of reconciliation, but also increase awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge, and leadership across all sectors of Australian society.

This Reflect RAP enables ACT Natimuk to deepen its understanding of its sphere of influence and the unique contribution it can make to lead progress across the five dimensions. Getting these first steps right will ensure the sustainability of future RAPs and reconciliation initiatives, and provide meaningful impact toward Australia's reconciliation journey.

Congratulations ACT Natimuk, welcome to the RAP program, and I look forward to following your reconciliation journey in the years to come.

Chairperson Report

Sue Pavlovich

CHAIRPERSON, ACT NATIMUK



As Chairperson of Arapiles Community Theatre (ACT Natimuk) it is a privilege to present our first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Our Reflect RAP details a firm and ongoing commitment to recognise and support diversity in cultures, and foster collaboration and reconciliation between the First Peoples of Australia and the wider community.

ACT Natimuk operates from Wotjobaluk Country at the foot of Dyurrite (Mt Arapiles) in the Wimmera region. Before colonisation, Australia's First Peoples enjoyed cultural wellbeing for tens of thousands of years.

Since colonisation, artistic development opportunities for artists and audiences in our regional area have privileged settler interests.

We aspire to engage, partner, and work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in a meaningful way to achieve improved artist and audience opportunities, and arts equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in the Wimmera.

We commit to increasing cultural awareness throughout the organisation by improving knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, protocols, and dates of significance.

As part of our reconciliation journey, ACT Natimuk will:

1. Build relationships with Wotjobaluk peoples and organisations, along with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
2. Model and encourage respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
3. Create and engage in opportunities for reconciliation.
4. Document progress against our plan.

I invite everyone—as individuals, arts workers, and practitioners, to take steps to advance reconciliation.

About the Artist

Thomas Marks

ARTIST & WOTJOBALUK/GUNAIKURNAI PEOPLE



"Becoming an artist has changed me in so many ways it has given me a better perspective and outlook on life and it has taught me to have patience; I guess it's created a whole new world for me and has given me a lot more confidence in myself."

Thomas Marks, also known as Marksey, is a proud Wotjobaluk/Gunaikurnai artist who grew up on Gunaikurnai country, currently based in Ballarat on Wathaurong Country where Thomas is involved with Ballarat based arts collected Pitcha Makin Fellas.

Thomas has no formal training but always knew he had an artistic side. He says he didn't feel able to express it until he went to prison, where he joined The Torch program in 2018. Thomas grew up as a child of the Stolen Generation and speaks about creating artwork as his chance to tell his story to the wider community. "During my time in prison I got to meet and connect with other Indigenous artists who inspired me. What the Torch Program has done for me, from when I first started with them, was that they gave me a sense of belief in myself, and confidence in letting me know that I was able to achieve and produce artwork for them and people in the wider community who would appreciate my artwork. It's an organisation that provides you with a sense of self-worth and that you are worth something as a person."

Thomas uses acrylics on canvas and has developed a personal unique style. "I guess I like bright colours (acrylics), that's also traditional and contemporary combined together. I just like to mix it up to experiment different styles like linework and crosshatching and sometimes dots but I like to consider my poems written on my artwork, is my style."

Thomas' artworks often feature poems that tell stories of his past. "I get my inspiration from my stolen generation background, as a child and through my life experiences in trying to connect back to my identity, culture and Aboriginality. I'm trying to find out who I really am."

He attributes his painting practice to much of the healing he has done and says it gives him a sense of belonging. Whilst in prison Thomas won two NAIDOC awards in 2018 (Because of her, we can) and 2019 (Truth, Treaty, Voice). His artworks were then printed onto NAIDOC shirts proudly worn by his peers.



Our RAP Artwork

Girrin and Dyinap
Thomas Marks, 2023

The black cockatoo (Girrin) represents Indigenous Australians and the sulphur crested white cockatoo (Dyinap) represents non Indigenous Australians.

The bringing together of two cultures and striving towards a reconciliation that will benefit both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians to connect and heal as one.



Our Business

ACT Natimuk is a regionally based arts development, presentation and event organisation that supports and invests in opportunities for artists to push the boundaries of art making, whilst bringing people together in participatory and culturally enriching ways.

We invite collaboration with artists and communities regionally, Australia wide and internationally. Although dependant on events offered annually, our audience reach is in the range of 5,000 and this continues to grow.

We deliver a suite of programs supported by a vibrant established volunteering culture with each program having its own sub-committee.

Through these programs we develop opportunities for:

- A viable sustainable creative practice in regional Victoria
- Professional development and creative exchange for local and visiting artists
- Equity and inclusive engagement practices for local First Nations creatives
- Making and presenting creatives' works to a range of audiences
- Market development and negotiating on-selling creative works
- Engagement, participatory art and capacity building of communities including volunteering
- Relationships with other organisations to bring new creative opportunities and creatives to the region

We are driven by 5 goal based principles:

- PRESENCE To creatively touch the world - we are visibly present
- PRACTICE To build a culture of diverse, sustainable and inclusive arts practices and programming - we invent and support opportunities for artists to push the boundaries of their art practice
- ENGAGEMENT To bring people together in participatory and culturally enriching ways - we are engaged with our communities
- RECONCILIATION To recognise, respect and develop relationships with First Nations peoples. To communicate, consult and seek consent in an inclusive manner
- CONFIDENCE To operate with confidence and sustainability - we are financially strong, responsibly governed, skilfully marketed and environmentally responsible

Our office is based in Natimuk. Our Committee number seven, one of whom identifies as a First Nations person. We employ two regular part-time staff, none of whom identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples. We regularly contract and employ temporary project artists and arts workers of which has included the employment of 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Our organisation membership currently sits at 36.

Our RAP

ACT Natimuk has reconciliation as a driving principle to assist our community in navigating a culture of respect, deep listening, and transition. ACT Natimuk provides leadership within the town through a history of collaborating with First Nations communities and artists in projects and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists (both local and visiting). Local projects such 'Listen Up' which was a collaborative project with Black Hole Theatre and Wergaia Elder Ron Marks and Wotjobaluk and Ngarrindjeri artist Tracey Rigney. It featured First Nations knowledge of the local area. Further afield in Bendigo, as part of the 'Space and Place' project, Poppet was a major aerial and projection performance on the iconic Poppet head in Bendigo and was created in partnership with the Dja Dja Warrung Peoples.

ACT Natimuk is committed to the path of reconciliation through a formal RAP process, seeking to employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers, seeking the appropriate cultural advice and increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander access to Arts support. We deeply

respect the process of local and nationwide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in their aspirations for self-determination and equity.

Our Chairperson champions our RAP by encouraging the Board, general committee, staff and organisation members to build their awareness of our RAP commitments and to be engaged in all aspects of it.

Our working group members have a range of expertise across the arts, and community development industries. One of our working group identifies as a First Peoples and many of the others have worked and collaborated with First Peoples in their employed positions as well as art projects they have engaged in as creatives. All are committed to their personal learnings and to ACT Natimuk's reconciliation journey of learning.

As a small organisation with only a part time General Manager responsible for the day to day running, the

General Manager is noted as being accountable for many of the deliverables, however the working group team which is made up of a number of committee members and general organisation members will work on the deliverables as individuals and in teams. A full history and the steps of our RAP process will be documented therefore providing the knowledge required should there be change over in the role of the General Manager. This will ensure a consistent and cohesive plan as ACT Natimuk grows and develops further RAPs over the years.

ACT Natimuk aims to create meaningful relationships with, and real opportunities for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creatives and the organisations which represent them. ACT Natimuk is developing an inclusive approach, with best practice working relationships at the core of all business. Cultural safety is paramount in order for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists to engage with the wider community of Natimuk in meaningful and beneficial ways. In formalising a Reconciliation Action Plan with Reconciliation Australia, ACT Natimuk takes tangible steps towards truly representing all people in the community, to creating real opportunities for truth telling and introspection through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artistic expression opportunities, cultural advice and collaboration and support of national and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander events. By employing and collaborating with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, ACT Natimuk hopes to lead the way towards a long-awaited healing process for the whole community.

ACT Natimuk will achieve this through consultation with communities, First Nations leaders, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and artists and through creative work produced by First Nations artists.

Measurable goals are written into ACT Natimuk's Strategic Plan, such as developing culturally safe spaces and arts

projects driven by First Nations Artists, increasing the number of paid roles for First Nations peoples in ACT Natimuk events and investing in First Nations creatives and their works. Our Cultural Protocols and Cultural Safety documents having been vetted by First Nations advisors, will guide ACT Natimuk's actions in all areas to ensure Cultural Safety for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who come into contact or develop relationships with the organisation.

In its re-orientation as a leading regional arts organisation ACT Natimuk advocates and collaborates from a place of respect and acknowledgement of the sovereignty of the lands on which it operates. ACT Natimuk is fortunate to have First Nations representation on its committee.

As part of ACT Natimuk's more recent reconciliation journey, its staff, board and members of the working group have undertaken the first round of cultural competency training through Centre for Cultural Competence Australia. The development of this Reflect RAP provides an ongoing framework to develop and strengthen the organisations cultural competency. ACT Natimuk has also recently developed its first Cultural Safety Policy and Cultural Protocols Policy.



ON WIMMERA LAND ARTWORK, PAINTED WITH LIGHT PROJECT.
ARTIST: TANISHA LOVETT, GUNDITJMARA AND WOTJOBALUK ARTIST.
PHOTO: MARY FRENCH

ACT Natimuk, through its festival, the Nati Frinj, major projects and formerly the Goat Gallery, has presented and supported many First Nations creative works including;

- Engaged by Horsham Rural City Council to curate projection artwork from Wotjobaluk artists and highlight it on buildings along the renamed Yangga Tyerrang Street (Firebrace Street) for National Reconciliation week 2022;
- A first development of a new projection residency, Painted with Light, led by Wotjobaluk, Djubagalk and Jadawadjali artist Gail Harradine with Wotjobaluk, Gunditjmara artist Tanisha Lovett 2020;
- Traditional Owner Ron Marks and his Djagua Rarkee Earth Oven experience and feast 2019;
- Black Hole Theatre, in collaboration with Ron Marks and community Here They Come! parade performance featuring Tchingal the Giant Emu 2019;
- Black Hole Theatre, in collaboration with Ron Marks and Tracey Rigney audio presentation Listen Up! featuring First Nations knowledge of the local area 2019;
- 'Space & Place' Poppet - a major aerial, projection, shadow, sound and light performance centred on the iconic poppet head and capturing the stories of Bendigo and its people. A State Government commission and in partnership with Dja Dja Wurrung as part of the Regional Centre of Culture in Bendigo, 2018;
- Goat Gallery exhibition Manja by Wotjobaluk, Djubagalk and Jadawadjali artist Gail Harradine 2017;
- Collaboration with Wergaia Traditional Owner Ron Marks, Dusk projection project, Nati Frinj 2017
- Made in Natimuk's (ACT Natimuk's on-selling arm) support of a Dave Jones In My Day animation with local Aboriginal co-operative Goolum Goolum 2010;
- Space and Place Latrobe for Commonwealth games Cultural Program in 2006 saw collaboration between Gunai Kurnai people of Gippsland, YSpace and ACT Natimuk artists. The Space and Place touring model is now represented by ACT Natimuk through their touring model Made in Natimuk (MiN);
- Initially produced by YSpace, 'Space & Place' Natimuk 2003, 2004 was a collaboration with First Nations artists and ACT Natimuk artists prior to creation of Barengi Gadjin Land Council - this Space And Place model set up some of the first engagement and collaborations between First Nations artists and ACT Natimuk;



WILKURR, DINGO - DIGITAL ARTWORK ON ALUMINIUM 2021
ARTIST: YAMA HARRADINE, WOTJOBALUK/DJUBAGALK/WERGAIA ARTIST.
PHOTO: DAVE JONES
RECONCILIATION WEEK 2022 PROJECTIONS, HORSHAM.
COMMISSION PROJECT THROUGH HORSHAM RURAL CITY COUNCIL

ACT Natimuk has also advocated locally for creative First Nations initiatives, including supporting letters for Horsham Rural City Council in their successful submission to the RAF Recovery Boost for People, Projects, Place project. This project will support the peoples of the Wotjobaluk Nations to achieve their cultural and creative ambitions working with the Barengi Gadjin Land Council. We have also given Black Hole Theatre letters of support for the development of a new theatre work for children which is written by First Nations writer and filmmaker Tracey Rigney.

The organisation is working on building relationships with Barengi Gadjin Land Council and seeking opportunities for collaboration with other First Nations organisations in the local area.

Relationships

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
1. Establish and strengthen mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations within our local area or sphere of influence. Research best practice and principles that support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations. 	February 2023	General Manager
		January 2023	General Manager
2. Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week (NRW).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circulate Reconciliation Australia's NRW resources and reconciliation materials to our staff. Promote National Reconciliation Week activities to our Members via monthly newsletter, special event newsletters, Members events, social media platforms Facebook and Instagram, website announcement, local community newsletter RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NRW event. Encourage and support staff and senior leaders to participate in at least one external event to recognise and celebrate NRW. Create and conduct ACT Natimuk NRW event 	May 2023	Communication Officer
		May 2023	Communication Officer
		27 May - 3 June 2023	General Manager
		27 May - 3 June 2023	RWG Chairperson
3. Promote reconciliation through our sphere of influence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate our commitment to reconciliation to all staff. Identify external stakeholders that our organisation can engage with on our reconciliation journey. Identify RAP and other like-minded organisations that we could approach to collaborate with on our reconciliation journey. 	November 2022	ACT Chair
		December 2022	ACT Vice Chair
4. Promote positive race relations through anti-discrimination strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research best practice and policies in areas of race relations and anti-discrimination. Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, and future needs. 	November 2022	General Manager
		February 2023	ACT Secretary
		February 2023	Policy Officer



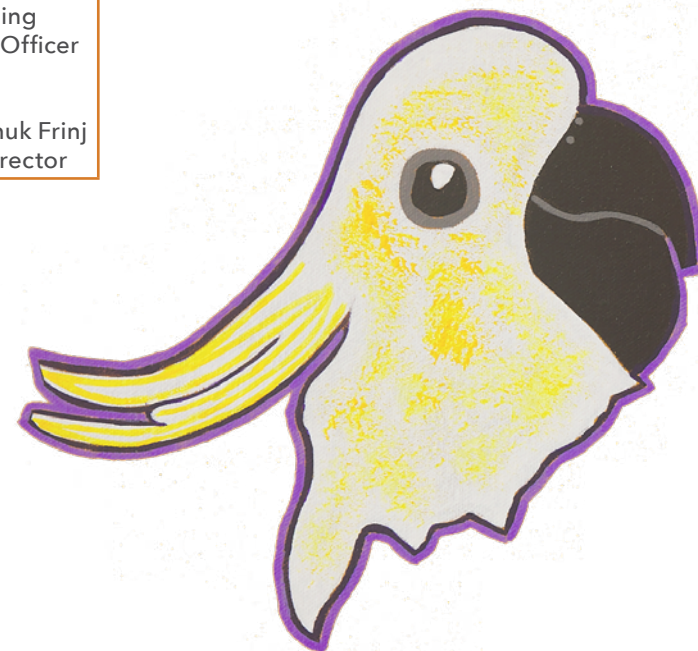


Respect

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
5. Increase understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights through cultural learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a business case for increasing understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights within our organisation. • Conduct a review of cultural learning needs within our organisation. • Commission a piece of First Nations art to feature as signage for the ACT Natimuk office that acknowledges the land and the Traditional Owners. • Facilitate bi-monthly cultural awareness sessions for staff and committee to advance cultural competence. • Host a Reconciliation Film Club movie for organization committee, staff and members. 	April, 2023	RWG Chairperson
		December 2022	General Manager
		December 2022	General Manager
		February, 2023	General Manager
		June 2023	ACT Natimuk Film Club Officer
6. Demonstrate respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by observing cultural protocols.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an understanding of the local Traditional Owners or Custodians of the lands and waters within our organisation's operational area. • Increase staff's understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols, including Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols. 	February 2023	General Manager
		July 2023	General Manager
7. Build respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories by celebrating NAIDOC Week.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness and share information amongst our staff about the meaning of NAIDOC Week. • Introduce our staff to NAIDOC Week by promoting external events in our local area. • RAP Working Group members to participate in an external NAIDOC week event. 	June 2023	General Manager
		June 2023	Communication Officer
		2 July - 8 July 2023	RWG Chairperson

Opportunities

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
8. Improve employment outcomes by increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a business case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment within our organisation. • Build understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities. 	March 2023	ACT Chairperson
		March 2023	ACT Chairperson
9. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander supplier diversity to support improved economic and social outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate Supply Nation membership. 	November 2022	General Manager
10. Increase arts opportunities for First Nation Artists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will conduct an annual review of arts programming to include a minimum of two First Nations programs. These programs would include a digital projection event/opportunity, and dance/movement/circus skills opportunity. • Sponsor the creation or development of a First Nations led project on an annual basis 	March 2023	ACT Natimuk Programming Curatorial Officer
		March 2023	ACT Natimuk Frinj Festival Director





Governance

Action	Deliverable	Timeline	Responsibility
11. Establish and maintain an effective RAP Working Group (RWG) to drive governance of the RAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a RWG to govern RAP implementation. • Draft a Terms of Reference for the RWG. • Maintain Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation on the RWG. 	April 2023 November 2022 April 2023	General Manager RWG Chairperson RWG Chairperson
12. Provide appropriate support for effective implementation of RAP commitments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define resource needs for RAP implementation. • Maintain a Senior Leader in the role of RAP Champion • Engage senior leaders in the delivery of RAP commitments. • Define appropriate systems and capability to track, measure and report on RAP commitments. 	November 2022 April 2023 February 2023 February 2023	RWG Chairperson ACT Secretary ACT Chairperson Policy Officer
13. Build accountability and transparency through reporting RAP achievements, challenges and learnings both internally and externally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Reconciliation Australia to verify that our primary and secondary contact details are up to date, to ensure we do not miss out on important RAP correspondence. • Contact Reconciliation Australia to request our unique link, to access the online RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire. • Complete and submit the annual RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire to Reconciliation Australia. 	June 2023 August 2023 September 2023	General Manager General Manager General Manager
14. Continue our reconciliation journey by developing our next RAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register via Reconciliation Australia's website to begin developing our next RAP. 	September 2023	RWG Chairperson

ACTNATIMUK

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