

Giringai man Uncle James Wilson-Miller dedicates Honorary Doctorate to Grandmother Jean

One of Australia's most respected Koori historians has accepted an Honorary Doctorate from Australian Catholic University on behalf of the woman who first encouraged him to read and write.

Uncle James Wilson-Miller, a member of the Gringai clan of the Wonnarua people of the Hunter Valley in NSW, received a Doctor of the University, ACU's highest honour, in Sydney on May 18. Sydney-based priest and anthropologist, Fr Gerald Arbuckle SM, also received an honorary doctorate on the same day.

"This award ranks among the highest and most significant that I have ever received in my existence on this planet," Uncle James said.

In accepting the award, Uncle James dedicated the Honorary Doctorate to his Grandmother Jean Miller, who raised and protected him after her own seven children were traumatically stolen from her.

"Even as limited as she was in education, she certainly made sure I could read and write by encouraging me to go to school everyday," Uncle James said.

"I doubt that I'd be where I am today if I hadn't listened."

A strong advocate for the rights of the Aboriginal people, especially the right to education, Uncle James said he was heavily influenced by the likes of activist and artist Oodgeroo Noonuccal, author Kevin Gilbert, and Charles Perkins.

"During those times there were a lot of people who were speaking up and speaking out for Aboriginal concerns. Those sorts of people influenced me too," he said.

Born in Sydney in 1949, Uncle James has established himself as a respected Koori historian and researcher, an experienced Aboriginal tertiary educator, and award-winning author of *Koori: A Will to Win – The Heroic Resistance, Survival and Triumph of Black Australia*.

He has previously worked as a Curator of Koori History and Culture at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney for nearly 19 years.

Uncle James was also a teaching fellow and lecturer at the University of New England, where he developed and documented several university courses in Aboriginal Studies. He also developed an Aboriginal Studies course for the Australian Army.

ACU Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Zlatko Skrbis, said Uncle James's dedication, strong work ethic, and his will to succeed was an inspiration to all.

"Uncle James has dedicated his life to serving his Aboriginal people through preserving the history of the Gringai Clan as a cultural curator and historian and seeking ways to educate the wider community about the concerns of First Nations people," Professor Skrbis said.

"Not only have his extensive contributions had a profound influence on Australia, but have been praised at an international level.

"ACU proudly recognises Uncle James's dedication to country and culture through the bestowal of a Doctor of University."

Uncle James Wilson-Miller is available for interview.

Media Contact: Emilie Ng, 0475 963 606, emilie.ng@acu.edu.au

Australian Catholic University has specialists who can comment on news matters relating to their area of expertise. Please direct requests to ACU's [Media Team](https://www.acu.edu.au/media-enquiries) at [acu.edu.au/media-enquiries](https://www.acu.edu.au/media-enquiries).