



NAIDOC Perth Inc.
C/- Noongar Radio
201 Beaufort Street, Perth
PO Box 8462, Perth WA 6849

www.naidocperth.org
[@NAIDOCPerth](https://www.instagram.com/NAIDOCPerth)
Media: 0457 877 308
media@naidocperth.org

MISS NAIDOC PERTH 2014 FINALISTS

Aggie Mannel



Aggie is a 19-year-old Torres Strait Islander and Yarrabah woman currently studying psychology at the University of Western Australia. Aggie's drive for psychology is fuelled by the dream of being able to engage, support and educate Indigenous youth by working as a psychologist in the community. She wants to voice the issues of mental health and education. Aggie puts her dreams into actions through volunteering with many organisations including the Indigenous Australian Engineering Summer School (IAESS), the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME), Indigenous Communities Education & Awareness (ICEA) and True Blue Dreaming. "I am proud of our rich culture and hope to ignite that strong flame within other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples." Entering Miss NAIDOC Perth was a step out of Aggie's comfort zone, but an important step on her quest: "I applied for Miss NAIDOC Perth to broaden my networks

within the community, and promote what I am most passionate about: mental health awareness and closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous education. I can't think of anything more important than mentoring and inspiring our youth, as it is fundamental for them to grow and nurture their education and self-worth, and strengthen their identity and culture." Aggie's Miss NAIDOC Perth experience has been much more than she expected as it reminds her of the common thread that weaves Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities together. She enjoys spending time with the other participants and sharing their passions for giving back to their peoples.

Amy Groves



Amy is an 18-year-old Noongar / Nyiyaparli woman, who grew up in Perth. She currently studying a Certificate IV in Holistic Counselling and Mind-Body Medicine at the Life Academy. Following the passing of both her cousins, Amy felt an urge to ensure that everyone gets a fair go by encouraging the media to change its focus to a more positive portrayal of Aboriginal people: "I've always been brought up not to judge. But the media does judge and portrays Aboriginal people negatively. I want to change how the media thinks of my culture. There are a lot of racist comments, which are unfair, as we have never been given a chance." Amy is loyal to her mob and family, and awaits with excitement for the Miss NAIDOC Perth crowning, where she will stand up to change the perception of Aboriginal people. This strong sense of community has been spoon-fed to Amy: "I've been brought up by two strong Aboriginal families, which has inspired me and made me very family orientated.

I'm always there when family needs me, and I try to help out whenever I can. I don't know where I'd be without them." Amy's most important goal is to become a mentor for the up-and-coming generation.



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Ashlea Walley



Ashlea is a proud 22-year-old Noongar / Yamatji woman living in Bassendean, with most of her family scattered over WA. With an Aboriginal father and Australian mother, Ashlea has been exposed to two worlds that give her valuable experiences that she happily shares with others through her work as a model and program coordinator for the Wirrpanda Foundation's Deadly Sista Girlz Program. By mentoring young girls she inspires other budding young leaders to be proud of their culture and who they are. "In Aboriginal culture shame is a big thing, and with the girls I work with I see that a lot of them are afraid to promote themselves and lack self-belief. I want to be a positive role model for them and for the broader community." Ashlea has already had many leadership experiences including a top 24 placement in the 2012 Western Australian Miss Universe competition, and winning Belle of the NAIDOC

Perth Ball in 2010 and 2011 and is immensely proud of her heritage: "Being Aboriginal is whom I am, it's what I'm proud of. I feel confident in who I am and I know that I belong." Through Miss NAIDOC Perth Ashlea aspires to continue growing her skills and confidence to represent young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

Christina Geerlings



Christina is a 25-year-old Bardi woman studying a Bachelor of Education at Curtin University and working full time as an Aboriginal and Islander Education Officer. She enjoys working with kids, and wants to encourage them to challenge themselves: "Everyone must challenge themselves by giving it a go, and it can be anything, as long as you think it's fun or interesting. You can dream big and small, but you have to have a go." This year Christina feels she is putting herself out there by taking up any opportunity crossing her way. She even started coaching a local Indigenous under 13 girl's soccer team despite not having much soccer experience. Christina has been helping the girls to get outside their boundaries by involving them in community activities. "I used to hold myself back because I didn't feel confident, but now I'm living my life with no regrets and it's great fun!" Christina is passionate about her life and being Aboriginal: "I love being

Aboriginal. My culture is important and I would be lost without it." She applied for Miss NAIDOC Perth because she enjoys meeting inspiring women, learning about her culture, and aspires to run her own school with a strong Indigenous focus. By achieving this goal she can pay forward her many good experiences and share Aboriginal culture.



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Jaimee Coster



Jaimee is a 22-year-old Yamatji woman with a goal-oriented mind-set, who feels it is unique to be an Aboriginal person: “Going to the bush, and hearing stories about my family, it’s great. Not many people get to experience that. My family is in Geraldton, Mullewa and the midwest, so we would go out to my family’s land to cook kangaroo, and other stuff in the ground. When I go out there it feels like home, because being around family makes you feel like you belong. It’s your land, where you come from, and it’s being proud of that.” After completing her WA Certificate of Education, Jaimee landed a job in the WA Police, which lead her to Miss NAIDOC Perth. “Part of the reason I applied was because of my work experiences, where I’ve seen bad stereotyping of Aboriginal people in particular when it comes to crime. But we are not all bad.” Jaimee wants to change things and sees Miss NAIDOC Perth as a great way to learn about leadership and advocate for her mob: “It’s

been great meeting these girls, hearing about what they do, and the pathways they want to forge. I’ll make some great friends. Hopefully, we can become advocates for our communities and together represent our cultural diversity.”

Nicole Cox



Nicole is a 27-year-old Noongar woman, currently working as an Aboriginal and Islander Education Officer and studying a Certificate IV in Education Support at TAFE. She is also a proud single mother of a 7-year-old boy. With a ‘take it as it comes, keep your head up’ attitude, Nicole wants to make a change: “I applied for Miss NAIDOC Perth so I could be a positive role model for people in my community and to gain confidence to further my skills.” After a personal experience with mental illness, she feels a strong need to help break down the stigma and raise awareness about mental health. “I want to change the fact that Aboriginal youth have the highest suicide rate. It is heartbreaking that so many of our young people are in such a dark place.” Nicole has enjoyed being part of Miss NAIDOC Perth and enchants the event with her funky and positive attitude: “It’s a lot of fun and exciting. I’ve enjoyed meeting the other girls and I’m looking forward to presenting

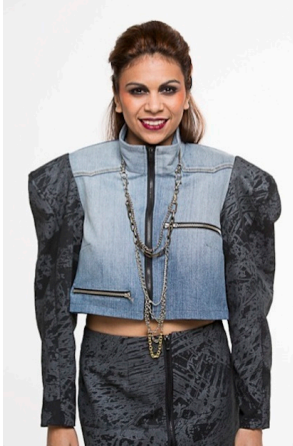
myself to the community in a positive way.”



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Sacorae Burgoyne



Sacorae is a 22-year-old Nunga woman born in South Australia, who has spent most of her life in Perth. She works for Australia Post as a Postal Service Officer. Helping her mother as a foster carer for young Indigenous children who have been affected by their parent's drug abuse has inspired her to be a role model: "Indigenous kids can be more than they think they can. Mum showed me that I could do more and I want to show them that they can too." Sacorae values family life and culture and feels a sense of belonging being Indigenous: "I'm proud of my heritage and my big family. We are very strong in our cultural ways. It's a weird thing – there's an instant spiritual connection between Indigenous people, even if we haven't met." Being part of Miss NAIDOC Perth has been inspiring for Sacorae: "I'm enjoying the Miss NAIDOC experience and sharing cultural ways. I feel very proud to be amongst these girls - they are very respectful

and positive. Having the girls by my side helps me in my confidence, we're all going in the same direction and it's like we're a little community."

Sara Cooper



Sara is a 24-year-old Wongi / Ngadju woman from the Central Goldfields. Sara has discovered a passion for academia since she moved to Perth with her four-year-old daughter, and started working as a model with Aboriginal Model Management. She has a Certificate III in Business and Health, and has been involved in Indigenous Chaplaincy. Despite loving her cosmopolitan lifestyle, Sara sees herself as a country girl brought up with her Aboriginal culture close at heart: "Kalgoorlie is a place that grounds me. I love being in the bush and with my people. Norseman is where my grandmother was born. She taught me everything I know about the Bush." Sara's long-term goal is to become a doctor, which ties in nicely with her passion for health. This interest stems from her own experiences, including losing her mother a couple of years ago, and living in the Goldfields where she witnessed the effects of poor health on people's lives. Being part of Miss NAIDOC

Perth is a great opportunity to share her passions with likeminded Aboriginal women: "I'm so excited to be a part of such an uplifting program. It's something I've wanted to do for a long time, and I'm honoured that Miss NAIDOC Perth saw me as a positive role model for others." Sara sees Miss NAIDOC Perth as an eye-opener being amongst not only beautiful but also confident girls. It is an opportunity to share her passions, represent her community, and has been an amazing learning experience.



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Shelby Humphries



Shelby is an 18-year-old Noongar woman from Bunbury. After completing high school she secured an administrative position at Telstra, working in social media, community engagement and customer service. A new adventure is about to begin for Shelby however, she will be commencing a Bachelor of Education at the University of Western Australia next year and has an interest in learning about Aboriginal culture: “In high school they cut out Noongar language from the program even though it was so popular. Now I try to get information about my culture by attending outside of school events in the community and through workshops.” Shelby enjoys hanging out with her community and family, and coaches her sister’s netball team, and on Sundays she plays herself. Participating in Miss NAIDOC Perth has been exciting and not as expected: “Miss NAIDOC is awesome! Especially the dancing – that was a nice surprise because I didn’t think it

was part of the program and it’s really fun”. Shelby’s future aspirations involve teaching and preferably teaming up with her mother to work together at the same school.

Vinka Barunga



Vinka is a 25-year-old Worrora woman from the Kimberley who grew up in the remote community of Mowanjum. She is currently in her fourth year of Medicine at the University of Western Australia and works part-time as a swimming teacher for the Department of Education and Training. In February this year, Vinka was a member of the first all Aboriginal Rottneest Channel swim team for 2014. The swim was significant to Vinka after the tragic passing of her niece late last year in a swimming pool. The team dedicated the swim to her niece and wore her name on their bathers. Vinka also sits on the WA Medical Students Society Committee, and has been involved with the ICEA Foundation promoting reconciliation and providing support to Indigenous students in high school. Vinka looks forward to improving Aboriginal health and giving back to her community when she graduates as a Doctor. Full of ambitions, Vinka is loving being amongst the Miss NAIDOC Perth participants: “Each woman brings a unique

perspective and representation of the diversity of Aboriginal culture, from strong single mothers, to university students, to accomplished women in the workplace.” Miss NAIDOC Perth serves as a platform for Vinka to represent an Aboriginal Australia, which she regards highly: “My Aboriginality is integral to who I am, and where I belong. It has provided me with family, culture, and knowledge, and has instilled immense pride that is so overwhelming, and so strong. Being Aboriginal has provided me with a unique perspective of life – influencing my morals and ethics, and how I view the world and my place within it. It has shaped everything I have done, and will ever do in my life – and this is something I am beyond proud of.”