

GEELONG ARTS CENTRE 1 OCTOBER  
MEDIA RELEASE 2021

## GEELONG ARTS CENTRE ANNOUNCES FEMALE-LED FIRST NATIONS CULTURAL CONVERSATIONS LIVESTREAM: *BA-GURRK MURRUP (WOMEN'S SPIRIT, PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE)*

Geelong Arts Centre is delighted to host a panel of exceptional local First Nations women to present a free *Cultural Conversations* livestream at 3:30pm on Saturday 23 October; *Ba-Gurrk Murrup (Women's Spirit, Past, Present and Future)*.

Facilitated by Noongar and Tuwharetoa artist and curator Kiri Wicks, join Wadawurrung Traditional Custodian and artist Deanne Gilson, Yorta Yorta/Baraparapa visual artist Dr Jenny Murray-Jones and Yorta Yorta woman/self-appointed 'sassy, psychic witchy sister' Allira Potter as they speak to the significant intertwinement of culture, womanhood and artistry.

In this series of *Cultural Conversations*, panellists will explore what it means to be a successful First Nations woman in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the legacy that each of these women look to create for future generations, the messages they wish to share with other young

women, and how they interpret identity through culture and creative practise.

Proudly supported by the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) and Deakin University's NIKERI Institute, the 90 minute free livestream provides an opportunity for Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people of all gender identities to gather, join the conversation, ask questions and walk together.

For tens of thousands of years, the land on which Geelong Arts Centre stands has been a significant site for gathering, belonging and storytelling for the Wadawurrung people of the Kulin Nation.

Geelong Arts Centre is committed to a long-lasting reconciliation journey that acknowledges, respects, includes and responds to First Nations community, and connects First Peoples' stories and voices

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with the broader community through meaningful artwork, performance and conversation.

To learn more about Geelong Arts Centre's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), visit [geelongartscentre.org.au/about-us/first-peoples/](https://geelongartscentre.org.au/about-us/first-peoples/)

Due to capacity restrictions, 20 in-person tickets have been made available to members of the First Nations community, with a free simultaneously broadcast livestream available to all.

Registration is free, but essential. Visit [geelongartscentre.org.au/whats-on/all-events/ba-gurrk-murrup-womens-spirit-past-present-and-future](https://geelongartscentre.org.au/whats-on/all-events/ba-gurrk-murrup-womens-spirit-past-present-and-future) to register.

A short biography for each speaker on the panel can be found below.

## THE SPEAKERS

### DEANNE GILSON

Deanne Gilson is an emerging elder and proud Wadawurrung woman of Aboriginal and Australian/English descent. An award-winning multi-media visual artist, with a practice spanning thirty-five years, Deanne is an early childhood and secondary school educator working freelance as a cultural consultant.

Establishing Kunawarra (black swan) Cultural Consultants in 2013, Deanne engages community, schools and business organisations in Wadawurrung history, culture, art and education,

delivering cultural awareness training along with Welcome to Country and Smoking ceremonies across her ancestral Country.

In addition, Deanne has completed a PhD, looking at how art can play a role in revitalising women's business, culture, identity, lost language and traditional ceremonial practices, that act as a way to empower and strengthen all Aboriginal people today. Further extending on the notion of bringing back traditional knowledge through art and education, aiding in the healing process and reconciliation towards Aboriginal people.

### DR JENNY MURRAY-JONES

Dr Jenny Murray-Jones is a Yorta Yorta / Baraparapa woman. Her Grandmother Mollie, and great aunt Bessie, were forcibly taken from their family around 1915, while the family worked at Redgate Station Balranald. After being raised in an institution from age 11, in the 1970s Jenny's grandmother broke down as she watched a television program about the stolen generations, she was inconsolable, and for the first time spoke of what had happened to her as a child.

Jenny's arts practice speaks a great deal about her family and their journey through the colonial period and into the present. Her PhD thesis titled 'Indigenous Families Beyond the Voids of Colonial History' documents where they have come from and where they are now. The exhibition 'Ancestors' brought together 10 large oil works on linen.

Jenny works in many visual / design areas. She is currently Visual Arts Co-ordinator / Lecturer at NIKERI Deakin and a registered secondary school



teacher, having taught in schools and lectured at NIKERI Deakin for over 10 years.

Jenny has exhibited widely at The Koorie Heritage Trust, Burrinja Gallery, NGV NAIDOC Exhibition, West Gippsland Art Centre, Maryborough Gallery, William Mora Gallery, Jiu Jian, Yangzi Province China and has many works in both private and public collections.

### **ALLIRA POTTER**

Allira Potter is a proud Yorta Yorta woman, trained reiki practitioner, intuitive reader, energy healer, life coach and meditation guide. Allira's practice is fully immersed in culture, cultural awareness and education, with a focus on debunking the wellness narrative to ensure diverse representation and decolonisation of a white-dominated wellness space.

A self-appointed 'sassy, psychic witchy sister', Allira's profile is continuing to rise thanks to her warm and witty personality and refreshingly authentic approach to life. Allira's practice advocates for cultural diversity, body positivity, mental wellbeing, and conscious content that is both engaging and educational for her followers.

As a role model to young Indigenous women, Allira's inspirational story has been shared by high-profile media publications including Elle Australia, POPSUGAR, Mamamia, and Business Chicks along with feature interviews for Vogue Australia, The Urban List, SBS, and Syrup Aus. While her career is thriving, Allira will always place importance on being true to herself and her connection to the roots of her Indigenous culture.

Allira's great grandfather, Sir Doug Nicholls was an activist and the first Aboriginal Governor of South Australia. Her connection with her culture and learnings from her elders has led Allira to ensure that her business model will always put First Nations people first, including the creation of a private group where she offers all services free of charge based on donations from allies, and supporting and showcasing Indigenous brands and businesses.

### **FACILITATED BY KIRI WICKS**

Kiri is a proud Noongar and Tuwharetoa woman who grew up on Yaburara Country amongst the red dirt and the spinifex and the beautiful islands of the Dampier Archipelago.

A mother of three, an Aunty, a sister, a daughter, a cousin and a niece, Kiri has had a lifelong love of art in all forms and graduated Deakin University with a Bachelor Degree in Visual Arts in 2018.

She is an Artist, Curator, Collaborator and Mentor, who has had a collaborative artwork exhibited in Tokyo, curated multiple exhibitions and held a solo show here in Geelong.

Kiri is currently working at NIKERI Institute, Deakin University as both Partnerships Coordinator and in an Academic role within the Indigenous Knowledges team.

A multimedia artist, Kiri is a storyteller with a passion for learning and sharing knowledge, and respecting old ways of knowing and doing within a contemporary world.



## QUOTES ATTRIBUTABLE

“To be able to partner with the NIAA and NIKERI Institute at Deakin University to not only highlight contemporary First Nations voices, but also showcase and celebrate local First Nations women and the rich history that informs their culture and art is incredibly special.

We aspire to be leaders in reconciliation, and believe it vital for us to make space for First Peoples to present stories that elicit deep understanding and appreciation for the oldest living culture on our planet.”

Quote attributable to Geelong Arts Centre CEO & Creative Director, Joel McGuinness

“2021 has seen so many amazing women excel and grow during these difficult and unpredictable times, and we are fortunate to have four exceptional First Nations women share their reflections, challenges and dreams with us.

Personally, culturally and creatively, there is much to be gained by choosing to listen, talk and walk together.”

Quote attributable to Geelong Arts Centre Senior Producer, Kelly Clifford