



Weaving our futures at AFTRS

By Dr Romaine Moreton



The Australian Film Television and Radio School's (AFTRS's) new corporate strategy, *Creating the Future*,

offers an exciting opportunity for AFTRS to renew our understanding of First Nations cultures by recognising the depth of First Nations knowledges, technologies, beliefs and values in this land now known as Australia.

AFTRS is committed to embedding First Nations cultures within the school, and as the inaugural director of the newly formed First Nations and Outreach Division, the first year of the division's existence has called for a deeper understanding of First Nations cultures, worldviews and belief systems, and how they interact with Western systems, including education, governance, and administration.

The dynamic philosophical and cosmological foundations of First Nations cultures underpins AFTRS's yet-to-be published First Nations Strategy, drawing on Indigenous peoples understanding of the world, to which relationships, relationality and kinship with the natural world are central.

The First Nations Strategy positions First Nations students, communities and peoples at the centre of First Nations learning, education and media training experience at AFTRS. By listening to



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First Nations communities, and respecting the role of community governance, we recognise the importance of First Nations communities in collective decision making, respecting the rules by which First Nations peoples organise their lives and communities.

This includes acknowledging ancient laws that centre shared ancestry with land, animals and all natural elements as being fundamental to First Nations sovereignty, self-determination, economic and storytelling autonomies.

During the first twelve months as the director of the First Nations and Outreach Division, the challenge has been to find a frame of reference to

support the weaving of First Nations values into the fabric of the school. In engaging with First Nations communities and peoples, the First Nations and Outreach Division has been developing processes to help identify and address anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, and racial discrimination by putting in place a plan for systemic reform that distinguishes AFTRS as a space where First Nations peoples, settler, refugee, immigrant, asylum seeker and culturally linguistic diverse communities can meet safely to form shared ethical spaces.

It is in these ethical spaces of engagement where Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples can share the richness of ideas, beliefs,



stories, and worldviews. This space of sharing we hope, will create an openness for the conversations that we need to have so that systemic reform can occur.

In the co-creation of ethical spaces of engagement, we will consult with First Nations students, communities, Elders, and industry and community media practitioners to develop curricula to support aspiring, mid-career and established First Nations media makers.

The challenge of successfully weaving First Nations' knowledges, voices, values, pedagogies, and curricula within AFTRS means we are not only tasked with challenging mainstream industry's ideas of success, but also what

success means to First Nations peoples and communities, with the intention of supporting communities in strengthening their own media-making capacities and capabilities.

In being led by First Nations communities and their systems of governance, AFTRS seeks to better understand how we can develop models of media training, education and storytelling practices to bolster the creativity and independence of First Nations peoples and communities with the view that the active participation of First Nations peoples will continue to transform, revitalise, and renew media-making practices within communities and industries, locally, nationally, and globally.

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