

## Children's reconciliation art and poetry give judges hope for the future

Worimi poet **Nicole Smede** and Gomeroi writer **Alison Whittaker**, author of *Blak Work* and editor of the 2020 collection *Fire Front: First Nations Poetry and Power* were excited and amazed at the quality of some of this year's writing entries for the 2020 Caring for Country Schools Reconciliation Challenge.

"What an amazing group, I could easily have chosen more," said Alison Whittaker, "Reading these works warms my heart and helps me get back to what's important."

Nicole Smede said "I am so impressed with the quality of the entries. Some very sophisticated works here from young writers! Reading these deeply thoughtful and powerful messages, I am hopeful for the future!"

These powerful messages are what the Schools Reconciliation Challenge is all about. For over 11 years Reconciliation NSW has guided and provided schools with activities, workshops, lesson plans and resources to ensure that in NSW and the ACT young people and educators can access free and engaging content to understand and celebrate First Nations cultures, histories, knowledge and contributions.

Over 600 students participated in the entries received for this year's Caring for Country challenge. The final selection includes 56 Artworks and 12 written entries representing 31 schools and 157 students. Schools ranged from Newtown and Double Bay to Emu Plains and Willcannia, from Tweed Heads, Tenambit and Minmi to Walhallow, Katoomba and Moruya.

Work from this year's finalists will be displayed digitally at both the Powerhouse Museum and Museums Discovery Centre during NAIDOC Week.

**Lisa Havilah, Chief Executive, Powerhouse Museum** said: "The Powerhouse has an important role to play in supporting the creativity of young people and their connection to Country. We are thrilled to be collaborating with Reconciliation NSW on this important project."

The judges were also pleased with the diversity of media in this year's challenge from installations (photographed) to mixed media which utilised many local elements of country including ochre, bark, leaves, collage, pencil sketches, painting and sculpture. Many works impressed beyond imagery with artists wise words and deep feelings of care for our Country, including concern about pollution, fires, flooding, drought and land clearing. Other popular themes were custodianship, plant diversity and recognition, respecting and learning from Elders.

Schools, families and friends will be proud of these young people whom the Schools Reconciliation Judges admired and were inspired by, knowing that our future is held in these capable, thoughtful and nurturing hands.

### SCHOOLS RECONCILIATION CHALLENGE: CARING FOR COUNTRY EXHIBITION

- **See the artwork** projected at Powerhouse Museum, Ultimo, 6–16 November and at Museums Discovery Centre, Castle Hill across two weekends 7–8 and 14–15 November. Entry is free, book online at <https://ma.as/bck>
- Join us for the **live launch on Zoom** hosted by the Powerhouse Museum with the Hon. Don Harwin Minister for the Arts and Aboriginal Affairs and the Hon. Sarah Mitchell Minister of Education. Tuesday 10 November, 10.30am  
<https://zoom.us/j/96909827747?pwd=SnkraE1HVvdTNW96OENjanVHMkRPdz09>

Meeting ID 96909827747  
Passcode: 9217

### Judges

Charleen Williams  
Assistant Registrar (ATSI Collection)  
Powerhouse Museum

Jane Watters  
Director, S.H. Ervin Gallery  
The National Trust (NSW)

Barbara Dowse  
Art Consultant/International Towers

Nicole Smede  
Vocalist | Musician | Poet

Alison Whittaker  
Research Fellow  
Jumbunna Institute  
University of Technology Sydney

Jody Broun  
Artist &  
Chief Director  
Aboriginal Housing

Annie Tennant  
National Urban Strategist, Property  
Lendlease

### School Finalists

Asquith Public School  
Blaxland High School  
Baulkham Hills High School  
Bourke St Public School  
Chatswood High School  
Christian Brothers' High School, Lewisham  
Chullora Public  
Danebank Anglican School  
Double Bay  
Farmborough Road Public School  
Fort St  
Katoomba North Public School  
Kegworth Public School  
Macquarie Fields High School  
Manly West Public School

Matraville Soldiers' Settlement Public School  
Minmi PS  
Moruya High School  
Nepean CAPA High School  
Newtown PS  
Our Lady of Mercy College, Parramatta  
Oxley Park Public School  
Rosary Primary School  
Rutherford Technology High School  
Tempe PS  
Tenambit Public School  
Tweed Heads Public School  
Walhallow Public School  
Wilcannia Central School  
Windsor Park Public School  
Winmalee High School

### Reconciliation NSW

For more information go to <http://www.reconciliationnsw.org.au>

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Museum of  
Applied Arts  
& Sciences

Reconciliation  NSW