

## Speaker Biographical Notes



### **David Hudson (Facilitator - Indigenous Entertainer, Musician, Artist and Actor)**

David Hudson is a descendent of Ewamian and Western Yalanji of North Queensland and is an internationally renowned musician, composer, actor and entertainer. In all these areas, his work comprises a combination of contemporary and traditional Aboriginal influences.

He is a highly accomplished performer and in 1997 David toured with Yanni (Greek composer) over a 7-year period. He has performed at the Taj Mahal, India and the Forbidden City China, acted alongside Marlon Brando and Val Kilmer in *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1996).

David is the co-founder, choreographer of Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park and from 2008-12 had returned to take control as General Manager.

David is well known around the world for his music and has released 28 albums which range in their mediums from the traditional right through to the classical arena. Mastering the didgeridoo at an early age, he is renowned as a pioneer in the art of making and playing the didgeridoo and taking this instrument to the world stage.

Performances in the corporate/convention and tourism areas have been all apart of in David's extensive career. He is an accomplished inspirational guest speaker and delivers cross cultural workshops to various organisations and corporate groups.

He has performed, promoted and travelled with Tourism Bodies with their promotions throughout Queensland, Australia and the world. He is also the recipient of an Honorary Tourism Ambassadors Award and a Centenary Medal for services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.

David / Didgeralia was commissioned to deliver the entertainment and interactive component of Dreamworld Corroboree, Gold Coast. In consultation with the Yugambah language people of the Gold Coast, David scripted a story that is brought to life the story of the how the Gold Coast began. Consultation on many cultural projects around Australia have also been on his agenda.

In 2014 David has been recognised with an Honorary Doctorate for his contribution to art, music and culture from James Cook University Cairns-Townsville.

Since then, David is in constant demand for his abilities to cross the many avenues of delivering MC duties, facilitating meetings/forums, entertaining and key note speaking.

2017 has seen him visit New Zealand, China for Tourism Australia, United States to present and speak about culture and to play in Villers-Bretonneux France for Anzac Day.



**Kevin Smith (Chief Executive Officer of Queensland South Native Title Services Ltd.)**

Kevin is a descendant of the Meriam Peoples of the Torres Strait with traditional connections to Ugar (Stephen Island) and Erub (Darnley Island). Kevin has over 20 years of professional experience in Indigenous affairs, including senior positions with the National Secretariat of Torres Strait Islander Organisations, the Brisbane Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service, the National Native Title Tribunal, the National Native Title Council, and Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL).

In 2008, Kevin successfully led the amalgamation and incorporation of the former Gurang and Greater Mount Isa Native Title Representative Body areas into Queensland South Native Title Services (QSNTS). Kevin holds qualifications in both law and business management from the University of Queensland. He was admitted as a solicitor in 1994.



**Dr Valerie Cooms (Member of the National Native Title Tribunal and Chairperson of Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation)**

Dr Cooms belongs to the Nunukul People of North Stradbroke Island. She has extensive experience leading Indigenous affairs organisations in the community and government sectors. Dr Cooms was a Director of Indigenous Business Australia. Between 2003 and 2008, she was the Chief Executive Officer of both Queensland South Representative Body Aboriginal Corporation and Queensland South Native Title Services.

Dr Cooms managed the WA Native Title Unit within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and is the Chairperson of the Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Registered Native Title Body Corporate for the Quandamooka People. Dr Cooms has a doctorate in political history from the Australian National University and was a visiting research fellow in the Native Title Research Unit at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) from 2009-2012. From 2015, Dr Cooms was offered an accepted Adjunct Professor appointments at Griffith University and University of the Sunshine Coast.



**Cameron Costello (Chief Executive Officer of Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation)**

Cameron is a Quandamooka man from Moreton Bay off the coast of Brisbane in South East Queensland. Cameron is a law graduate from the University of Queensland and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Leisure Management.

Cameron has worked previously in the legal industry and over 15 years in local and state governments delivering Indigenous policies and programs including the Backing Indigenous Arts Program and the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair. Cameron is currently the CEO of

Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation – the Native Title Body for the native title determination over Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island). He has also been the Chair of Minjerribah Camping, a joint venture business between the Quandamooka People and Indigenous Business Australia.



**Dr Lisa Ruhanen ((PhD, GCEd, BBusHons) is an Associate Professor in Tourism and Deputy Director of Education with the UQ Business School, The University of Queensland, Australia.)**

Dr Ruhanen joined the University in 2001 and in that time has been involved in over 30 academic and consultancy research projects in Australia and overseas in the areas of Indigenous tourism, sustainable tourism policy and planning, and climate change. Together with colleagues from Australia and New Zealand, she co-edited a forthcoming book on Indigenous Tourism: Cases from Australia and New Zealand. Lisa teaches undergraduate and

postgraduate courses in sustainable and responsible tourism, ethics, and tourism in developing countries.

Lisa has been actively engaged with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) since her secondment to the organisation's headquarters in Madrid in 2005. She is currently a board member of the Tourism Education Quality Assessment Program and an external research collaborator, consultant and program advisor for the UNWTO. She has held Visiting Research Fellow positions with Oxford Brookes University (United Kingdom), the University of Waikato (New Zealand), and as an invited guest lecturer at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (Hong Kong, China). She is currently an Advisory Board member at Wakayama University Tourism Research Centre, Japan.

Lisa and her colleagues have undertaken a number of research studies on Indigenous tourism and business sustainability including:

- Demand and supply issues in Indigenous tourism: A gap analysis (funded by Indigenous Business Australia and the Department of Resources Energy and Tourism).
- Indigenous Tourism in Australia: Point of difference (funded by Tourism Queensland to inform product development and positioning strategies for the State's Indigenous tourism product).
- Development, analysis and evaluation of a national diagnostic tool for profiling SME indigenous tourism product (funded by the Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism).
- A socioeconomic analysis of the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival (funded by the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. The outcomes of the study informed the further expansion of the festival through additional support and sponsorship).
- Exploring the market appeal of Indigenous tourism through an analysis of TripAdvisor reviews.



**Michelle Whitford ((PhD, 1st Class Honours, BArts Leisure Mgmt, Dip. Arts in Dance) is an Associate Professor and the Deputy Dean of Learning and Teaching in the Griffith Business School, Griffith University, Queensland, Australia)**

In her capacity as Deputy Dean Learning and Teaching, Michelle is currently working with an Indigenous colleague on embedding Indigenous perspectives across the curricula of the six Degree Programs of the Griffith Business School.

Since 1999, Michelle has been working with Indigenous peoples, communities and organisations both public and private, since 1999 on a wide range of projects, (both local and international) in areas including tourism and events, policy and planning, community and cultural development and sustainable business management and development. Projects include:

- a demand and supply study of Indigenous tourism in Australia;
- a marketing study focusing on the development and positioning of Indigenous tourism product in Queensland;

- a study profiling SME indigenous tourism product in Queensland;
- a socioeconomic analysis of the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival in Brisbane;
- an evaluation study on Indigenous cultural festivals in Papua New Guinea;
- a political analysis of an Indigenous festival in Mexico;
- an analysis of the Drumley Walk on the Gold Coast;
- a policy analysis of Indigenous tourism policy in Australia; and
- co-edited a special edition on Indigenous tourism in the Journal of Sustainable Tourism and also a book on presenting Indigenous tourism cases from Australia and New Zealand.

Michelle's expertise in research has been recognised globally. She is the recipient of seven awards for outstanding work in research, the most recent of which was the 2016 Donald Getz Biennial Award for Outstanding Research in Planned Events and the 2014 Outstanding Paper Award by the International Journal of Event and Festival Management.



**Mark Denning (A/Divisional Manager, Indigenous Land Corporation)**

Mark is currently the A/Divisional Manager for the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC). He is responsible for the ILC's whole of business operations across QLD and NSW including the core program delivery functions of land acquisition and land management investment. With a background and qualifications in land management, previous roles have included project consultancy and state training manager with Greening Australia (QLD) and managing youth diversionary programs in rural QLD. Mark has over 10 years' experience in Indigenous Affairs with expertise in employment and training programs, project management and developing land-based enterprises.



**Rachael Hodges (Assistant General Manager, Mossman Gorge Centre, Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia)**

Rachael is a strong and proud Goreng Goreng woman who has over 14 years' experience in Indigenous tourism and an additional 3 years in the hospitality industry. Rachael was the driving force behind Kuku Yalanji Dreamtime Tours, becoming the 1st Indigenous business in Queensland to receive full accreditation under the Respecting our Culture (ROC) certification program.

Rachael actively participated in the conception, planning, development and implementation stages of the now successful multi-award winning Mossman Gorge Centre. Rachael holds Diplomas in both Management and Tourism and has successfully completed 2 years in a Bachelor of Arts (Major in Journalism) degree at the University of Southern Queensland.

She is an active member of the Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) Indigenous Employees Network for North Queensland and recently assisted with the launch of the South East Queensland chapter of QTIC's indigenous Employees network.



**Robert Taylor (Chief Executive Officer of Western Australia Indigenous Tourism Operators Council - WAITOC)**

Robert Taylor has spent the last 28 years in the hospitality industry. Beginning in the back of house Roberts journey began in the kitchen where he qualified as a chef. He became executive chef for ALH in 1999, where he had a number of his recipes published in publications such as Table Magazine. In 2000 Robert and his partner went into hospitality property management and in 2003 formed a management company Forte Hospitality of which he was managing director of for the past 14 years.

Mr Taylor a Nhandu man has become the new CEO for WAITOC after a successful 14 months as the Association's Chairman becomes WAITOC's first ever Western Australian Aboriginal CEO. With Mr Taylor's migration from the Board table to become the chief administrator. His business experience, together with the knowledge he obtained during his time as the WAITOC Chair will be used to ensure the (ATDP) Aboriginal Tourism Development Program delivers outstanding tourism and economic outcomes while creating strong business enterprises for Aboriginal people and communities.

Robert specialises in operations of all areas of Hospitality, Tourism and mining and construction camps. Utilising his decades of experience, he has mentored and consulted for Aboriginal SME in both Western Australia and nationally. With this experience and his own operational expertise, he has a proven track record of developing business.

Robert will continue to be a key advocate in driving Aboriginal tourism to the next level by ensuring governments at all levels and other stakeholders work with the industry to create a sustainable future, and will oversee the daily operations of WAITOC.



**Rory O'Connor (Chief Executive Officer of Yugambeh Museum)**

Rory O'Connor is CEO of the Yugambeh Museum, an applicant in the Dangan Balun – Five Rivers Native Title Claim of south east Queensland and sits on the Griffith Institute for Tourism advisory board.

He is an author and journalist in both print and television. Past roles include seven years with Tourism Queensland assisting with National and International publicity for major products and two years producing travel television for London-based production house RDF television.

Career highlights include:

- The Drumley Walk (2005 -) a three-day walking pilgrimage through Yugambeh Country;
- Yugambeh Jarla - annual five-star corporate dinner for Gold Coast businesses to meet community;
- Yugambeh Language App 2013 - Australia's first multi-language App; and
- Language lessons available for schools from novice to fluent 2017.

In 2013, Rory authored the Indigenous Tourism Action Plan for South East Queensland. This process resulted in a partnership with Dreamworld, which in turn led to the creation of Dreamworld Corroboree - Australia's first major Indigenous attraction in a major theme park.



### **Eddie Ruska**

Uncle Eddie Ruska is a proud descendant and Elder of the Yuggera people of the Brisbane Region Nunukul and Nugi people of Stradbroke and Moreton Islands, and Koombamerri people of the Gold Coast area.

Uncle Eddie has a history of involvement in cultural heritage and environmental protection matters, and has worked extensively with government and the broader Aboriginal community to support Australia's environmental future well-being.

Uncle Eddie has spent many years working with young Aboriginal people, and is well-known for his work with the Nunukul Yuggera Aboriginal Dance Troupe whom he is the Manager and founder of since its establishment in 1995, The Dance Troupe supports Aboriginal young people who had come into contact with the juvenile justice system, providing them with a forum for reconnecting with culture. He has shown and mentored our young children for many years about their cultural heritage and has been an advocate in helping young children in turning their lives around and off the beaten track of disconnection.

Uncle Eddie is instrumental in creating sporting opportunities for young people and at risk youth.

Uncle Eddie is committed to educating non-Indigenous Australians about Aboriginal culture and history, and has been a strong supporter of organisations such as The Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association Ltd and World Suicide Prevention Day, and many events throughout southeast Queensland National and Internationally.

He has shown great ability and Cultural Knowledge in showcasing his culture through traditional and contemporary arts performance.

He has performed in productions and events all over Australia and the World showcasing his cultural performance through song, dance and various artforms.

### **Founding Member**

- We Care ATSI Service for Aged and Disabled
- Teen Care Youth Service for Youth caught up in the Juvenile Justice system
- Roys Retreat Youth Accommodation for Homeless Youth
- Kidz Care Child Protection Agency
- Ipswich ATSI Legal Service
- Torpedoes and Scorpions Softball Clubs
- Ngatana Lui Cultural Centre within the Catholic Ministries
- Nunukul Yuggera Aboriginal Dance Company

### **Sits on Various Boards and Advisory Committees within SEQ**

- Passed Board Member and Director of Ngaran Goori Native Title body for Yuggera, Jagera and Ugarapul Traditional Owners
- Queensland Tourism Indigenous Council
- Passed Board Member Wandarrah Preschool and Community Centre
- Member of Purga Elders and Descendants
- Griffith University Council of Elders
- Reestablishment of the Murri Court in Ipswich

## **Partner in Tourism Ventures**

### *Riverlife Mirrabooka*

An interactive and engaging display of the traditional music and dance of the Brisbane tribe. Taste native Australian Bush tucker and try your hand at painting and throwing boomerangs.

<http://riverlife.com.au/cultural/>

### *Great Australian Experiences – Spirits of the Red Sand (Dinner Show Experience)*

Connect with Aboriginal Culture like never before as you journey back in time to the Australia of the 1800's. Discover the spirit of the land and witness the drama and upheaval that took place as two very different cultures learn to live alongside each other. Told through song, dance, storytelling and effects in an interactive show, this is an Australian must-do for anybody visiting Brisbane or the Gold Coast.

<http://spiritsredsand.com/>



### **Shannon Ruska**

Shannon Ruska is a descendant of the Yuggera and Turbul people of the Brisbane, Logan Ipswich Regions, Nunukul and Nugi people of Stradbroke and Moreton Islands, and Koombamerri people of the Gold Coast area.

Shannon has been performing since the age of 8 years old.

Shannon is one of the founders and directors of the Nunukul Yuggera Aboriginal Dance Troupe since its establishment in 1995. The Internationally acclaimed Aboriginal dance troupe, Nunukul Yuggera whom are Traditional Custodians of the Brisbane Logan Ipswich Regions and also Stradbroke and Moreton bay Islands and Gold Coast Regions started 21 years ago and has travelled the world extensively, performing alongside some of the world's greatest performers and cultural ambassadors showcasing Traditional Aboriginal culture through song, dance and other various forms of cultural expression.

They won the Queensland Tourism Award three consecutive years putting them in the Hall of Fame for their tourism Experience, Riverlife Mirrabooka located alongside the Brisbane River.

Nunukul Yuggera prides itself on being one of the leading Aboriginal dance groups in Australia.

It is through hard work, determination and perseverance that they have established themselves as a powerful cultural force. Their performances mesmerise the audience through their honest, heartfelt and spiritually lifting expression as if the Dreamtime unfolds before your eyes. He has shown great ability of his coreography expertise in the cultural performance field through traditional and contempory arts performance.

Shannon was also a guest Curator for Queensland Performing Art Company's Cultural Production - Clansctry 2016 Opening.

Shannon has performed all over Australia and the World showcasing his cultural performance through song, dance, art and storytelling.