

First Nations Students Leading the Way

John Curtin College of the Arts students Billy Barakat, Sim Peolina, Jules Thomas (JCCA Alumni and co-founder of Maali Mia), Harrison Mathews and Phoenix Ewen.

John Curtin College of the Arts students are leading the way with their First Nations student group called Maali Mia – Home of the Black Swan.

Maali Mia came to life in February 2021 when now graduate Noongar woman Jules Thomas, saw an opportunity for students to share their culture and have a stronger voice in the school's cultural engagement.

"This group is important because it gives us a voice in the school community," said Jules.

"It means we can keep pushing and addressing things that need changing. Most of the changes better the school's environment and community for everyone, through a way which can be culturally friendly."

Conway Chunnary, a Mirawoong person and a Year 11 Gifted and Talented dance student, said he joined the group to meet other First Nations people at the College and share his culture.

"It's important that we have a space to share ideas and spread cultural awareness throughout the school," said Conway.

The 15 Maali Mia students have regular meetings to discuss topics that are important to them, and work with the college to advise on cultural events.

For NAIDOC week the Maali Mia students worked with staff to organise special guests, traditional dance and food, and a yarning circle for the event.

They've also created artwork for the John Curtin College of the Arts 2022-2024 business plan which explores the connection between the college and the local land.

Jules said she's proud that the college and students have created a friendly and safe space where they can work towards a culturally supportive environment.

“I’m proud we have identified differences in our cultural backgrounds and how we have acknowledged and learned to work with them and not in spite of them.”

<https://www.education.wa.edu.au/news/first-nations-students-leading-the-way?redirect=%2F>