



Liz Janney interviewed Savannah Brandis and Kira Fong

What is Kimberley Girl

Empowering Indigenous Women

Broome school girl Savannah Brandis took the initiative of entering in the Kimberley Girl programme this year (2017). During the two weeks she received lots of information to help in her future. Her confidence increased, especially in public speaking and she forged lasting friendships with girls from other parts of the Kimberley. Those qualities were noticed by facilitator Kira Fong, resulting in Savannah receiving the Ambassador's Leadership Award. For the next 12 months she will be the face of Nuff of the Puff campaign and will be visiting schools in the region to promote awareness of the harm of smoking.

"I was born in Broome and currently attend Broome Senior High School. I'm 17 and in my final year. About a year ago I decided to enter Kimberley Girl. I didn't tell anyone; I just did it. I am the second oldest in my family and have two brothers and a sister," said Savannah

"Kimberley Girl workshops and showcase events are run over the two weeks of the school holidays and it was really full on. I work weekends and after school at Wendy's Ice Cream Bar at Broome Boulevard, so it was an extremely busy two weeks.

Kira Fong from Goolarri Media was the facilitator and on the first day we introduced ourselves, telling others why we wanted to take part in Kimberley Girl. We were paired up and we had to draw an outline of ourselves on paper, writing down what we liked about ourselves as well as the other person. It was difficult at the start but once we got compliments from others it became easier. It was about breaking down barriers and making us feel more comfortable.

Over the next two weeks we had different facilitators to talk about sexual health, anger management, mental health and lateral violence. We had sessions on public speaking, managing social media and planning for our future. We had to write our own voice over of our plans for the future. We also had a professional photo shoot and catwalk training.

During the public speaking sessions we learned about vocal projection, using a microphone and speaking with the media. Preparing our own CV and work readiness were also covered. There were discussions on suicide awareness and prevention as well as other mental health topics.

The programme helped me to become more confident in setting goals, developing leadership skills and talking to people. I was freaking out at the thought of public speaking. Our facilitators gave us the skills and confidence to engage more in speaking to a crowd, and we all delivered our speeches pretty well.

The second week was finals week and there was a training and employment forum. I spoke to the Police about employment as I would really like to join the force or study criminology.

I received the Ambassador's Leadership Award and will be the face of the health campaign Nuff of the Puff. Promoting non-smoking and encouraging people to give up smoking. I will speak at local high schools to promote the Kimberley Girl Programme. Next year I will be assisting as a mentor during Kimberley Girl. Many previous participants come back to help."

Kimberley Girl was the brainchild of Kira Fong and I wanted to know what sparked the idea.

"I was in the modelling industry both in Australia and overseas for many years. I learnt some very positive

things from my journey, but also saw the pitfalls. Returning home to Broome I saw a need to empower young Indigenous women with the tools and skills to overcome the impact of social, economic and isolation disadvantage. I also wanted to give young women positive representation. There was a lot of negative publicity around at the time." said Kira.

"Kimberley Girl was introduced in 2004, targeting young Indigenous women between the ages of 16 and 25. Goolarri Media has been involved from the beginning, as they have the facilities to manage and host the event.

It started off very small. Just getting the girls on the catwalk. Each year we have expanded as we received more corporate support and now include both the Pilbara and Goldfields regions. The programme has provided valuable educational activities and opportunities directly addressing the needs of contemporary Indigenous culture, mental and physical health, positive lifestyles, work readiness and leadership values whilst minimising the effects of social, economic and geographical isolation.

Each year we look for about thirty two girls. If they are disengaged, not attending school and not employed, they must participate in a pre-Kimberley Girl training course which is run over two days by TAFE. Broome girls, because they live in a more urban area, have more opportunities and we wanted to ensure girls from remote areas would feel included.

The goal of the programme is for participants to increase self-awareness, see new and different life styles and opportunities. We want young women to return to their communities as positive role models. Yes, we do have girls who want to become models and are focused on that, but once they have participated in the programme they realise that there is so much more to enjoy.

Sometimes it is difficult to get them to have a go. We call it a programme. We don't use the words competition or pageant.

Kimberley Girl is run over two weeks. One week of heats and one week of finals. The majority of finalists this year were regional girls with only four from Broome. We are really getting a cross section of the Kimberley.

Goolarri Media also delivers Pilbara Girl, introduced in 2010 and Goldfields Girl, which began this year. It has been a fulfilling programme and it's wonderful to see past Kimberley Girls getting involved each year. Our tour facilitator, Kartika Eades was a 2005 participant and Buna Poelina, our Broome personal and professional development facilitator was the 2010 winner. Our backstage communication manager, Mystique Dia was the 2006 Kimberley Girl winner and many other past participants continue to be involved in the program in some way. We have a fantastic team at Goolarri and many of our production team have worked on this project since the first ever Kimberley Girl event back in 2004.

Sahvannah is a very mature 17 year old. Throughout the program Sahvannah was always the 'big sister,' the one who supported other girls with her arms out ready for a gentle hug. I think that is a very special trait, especially when there were a number of girls older than her. Sahvannah shone and her leadership capacity was recognised as she received the Ambassador's Leadership Award. Sahvannah will have a very busy year ahead of her."

To find out all about the winner of Kimberley Girl and the runners up check out the facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/Kimberley-Girl> or the Goolarri website <http://www.goolarri.com/kimberleygirl2017>

