



Family inspiration leads to journey into teaching: Joseph's story.



Joseph Collinson, a Kungarakan man growing up on Larrakia Country in Darwin, recalls going through his schooling life with no presence of male First Nations teachers. After embarking on his primary school teaching journey, this is something that he hopes to change.

“In our school, I am the only Indigenous staff member.

“Throughout my schooling life I never saw a male Indigenous teacher,” Joseph says.

Hoping to bridge the gap and encourage more First Nations peoples to consider a career in teaching, Joseph became a prominent figure in the ‘Be That

Teacher’ campaign - a joint Australian, state and territory government initiative which aims to showcase the value and importance of teachers.

For Joseph, to Be That Teacher means “being a role model and a mentor to the next generation of Australians”.

And upon reflection, he says it was his own mentor who contributed to inspiring him to take up a career in teaching.

“Through primary school, there was one teacher who would go (out of his way) to kick the football with us.

“Thinking back to what he did – he took that time to gain those relationships and take particular interest in what we were doing,” Joseph reflected.

Joseph's teacher may not have known the depth of his influence, but his legacy lives on in the classroom today.

“Thinking about that teacher, I often think about the impact it had on me and the teacher I am today”.

Joseph also credits his sister for recognising his ability to relate to and teach students whilst he worked at a vacation care centre during his final years of high school. She encouraged Joseph to

enrol in a Bachelor of Education (Primary) degree which she was also studying at the time and the two were able to support each other through to graduation. Both are now teachers in their home communities.

As a teacher, Joseph discovered the profound impact he could have on young minds, an impact which extends from the classroom.

“The role is much more than just teaching.

“It’s not about A to Z’s.

“It is about them growing as human beings.

“It is about mentoring and guiding (students) throughout all areas of their life.

“My role is not just for them to grow academically, but it’s socially, emotionally”.

Joseph initiated a conversation with his school principal about developing an Aboriginal designed shirt for the senior students at his school which was encouraged and supported. Joseph and very excited senior students then embarked on a journey to collaborate on a design that was representative of their schooling journey. This was represented by a saltwater crocodile swimming upstream symbolising their journey of learning and growing as people. The shirt was so well received, it will now be the official shirt for senior students for the next 10 years, something that Joseph and his students are very proud to have been a part of.

“Being able to be that role model, leader, that students could really look up to... it’s something I am very proud of.

“Hopefully I’m inspiring lots of young Indigenous students to go along this profession because it is definitely one of the most rewarding you could get,” Joseph says.

To find out more about a rewarding career in teaching go to www.BeThatTeacher.gov.au.