

## **Kapooka's Indigenous Aunty and Uncle**

Over a year on from their appointments as Kapooka's first Indigenous Aunty and Uncle, honorary Warrant Officers Class Two Hewitt Whyman and Joycelan Williams - better known at Kapooka as Uncle Huey and Aunty Joycelan - say Army is enriched by cultural exchange between First Nations people and Defence.

Uncle Huey - a Vietnam War Veteran and former Recruit Instructor - said Aboriginal people had always fought for their country. Even though the context of that expression has subtly evolved over time, it accounted for the strong desire among many Indigenous Australians to serve in the Australian Army.

"Going back, Country was always Country," Uncle Huey said.

"People who served Army, served the country – the whole of the nation. In the World Wars, there were indigenous people who went off and fought for Country – their own Country – whether it was Yorta Yorta, Wiradjuri, Kamilaroi or Barkinjee – they were all warriors of their own nations, but collectively, they were all warriors of this country.

"A lot of our mob are interested in Defence careers because they have a strong warrior spirit, they want to be defenders of Country. Back in the Frontier Wars, they were confronted, they fought for Country then. They want to continue defending Country," he said.

Aunty Joycelan said their role at Kapooka meant indigenous recruits were better able to bridge the gap between home and Army life, "Because they've left their family behind, some for the first time. We are like their Aunty and Uncle from back at home." Aunty Joycelan said.

"If they've got any problems they can unload them with us and we'll try and work together. If need be and we can't help by ourselves, we'll go to the officers so we can work together as a team and then the soldiers also learn that Army is family, and they can do that through us," she said.

Uncle Huey then added "we are exercising the cultural heritage of extended family." Aunty Joycelan said it was rewarding to see the development of indigenous recruits into soldiers "We've put through a lot of recruits and to hear their background and actually see them march out on that big special day and to actually become soldiers and how proud they are is beyond words."

"Often when they first start off they're not proud, they often don't know their identity, and we work on that to help them discover their identity, so they can be proud with that so they can continue on, and not step backwards. The kangaroo and the emu cannot move backwards. Those animals are on Australia's Coat of Arms and I always tell them, be like that, always move forward."

## **Our Indigenous Military History – We fought together ...**

Douglas Grant was born in Atherton, North Queensland in 1886. He enlisted into the Australian Army on 13 January 1916 and embarked for service in France with the 13th Australian Infantry Battalion on 22 August 1916.

On 11 April 1917 Private Grant was wounded and captured during the First Battle of Bullecourt. He was held as a prisoner of war in a camp at Wittenberg, and later at Wünsdorf, Zossen.

Douglas returned to Australia on the HMAT Medic in April 1919.

