

# Networking Tranby project: Student Experiences around Glebe

## Michelle Blakeney



Michelle graduating with Board member Kevin Tory (middle) & Head Teacher, Para Sene (right)

Michelle was a student at Tranby in 1988 for the Business Studies course, then again in 1990 for the Tertiary Prep course. She had come straight from Year 11 at Glebe High and wanted to get back into education. Michelle calls herself a story catcher, documenting her people's unique culture, talent, performance via video and photography.

The Tranby course 'was a eye-opener in 1988, the bicentenary. I was totally unaware of a lot of the history of our political movement and the struggles. We got to watch Indigenous films that I'd never, ever seen before, like *Women Of The Sun*. We had classes where we went on protest. A group of students went up to Brisbane, Musgrave Park, for the Commonwealth Games protest. As a young person I was never a part of any kind of activism or marches or anything!



Michelle Blakeney: protest rally Melbourne



Michelle's mother Selena had loved school when she was there, but had to leave at 15 because she was on the Cabbage Tree Island Mission and had to go to work. In her sixties, Selena embarked on her studies at Tranby, enrolling to do the Diploma of Community Development. Following her Graduation at Tranby, Selena then began studying at the University of Technology, graduating from the BA in Adult Education and Community Management in 2014.



**International comparisons:** '... and we learned what was happening now, comparing our state of affairs to international stuff. That broadened my awareness of what else is happening in other countries.'

**Heroes.** ..... Through studying at Tranby, I was introduced to many of our people who were artists, writers, poets and film makers...who are our story tellers. This is where I first heard the stories of our great warriors and resistance fighters. None of these stories were being told in my previous education experience.

**Books & Photographs:** I also loved that Tranby had a book shop on site called "Blackbooks". I never knew there was that many books written about our people. I often would just hang out at "Blackbooks" as if I was at the library. Looking through the images in the books I feel this is what inspired me to become a story catcher.

Michelle's powerful recent work is the re-photographing of images from Bomaderry Children's Home which she has placed within new sites, 'reclaiming the ownership of the image through the placement.' This and her work with Boomali Artists Co-op has been exhibited in the Tokyo Metropolitan Modern Art Museum.