

May's Story - The "Together Towards the Future" Mural

This breathtaking mural honours a pioneer in education, May O'Brien, who impacted Mount Hawthorn students and scores of Aboriginal students across Western Australia.

This is a collaborative piece designed by J.D. Penangke and hope_perth. Jade Dolman is an Aboriginal artist with Whadjuk/Ballardong, Eastern Arrernte heritage. Brandan, also known as Hope, is a renowned contemporary graffiti artist. May O'Brien's story is an integral part of Mount Hawthorn Primary School. She was the first female Aboriginal teacher in Western Australia. Mrs O'Brien grew up at Mt Margaret Mission, in the Northern Goldfields. May was determined from childhood to become a teacher, understanding the power of education, despite Aboriginal children such as herself, not being allowed to attend State Schools.



In 1961, she broke ground and was the first female Aboriginal teacher to teach non-Aboriginal children, she taught at Mount Hawthorn Primary School for 10 years. Later, she became an Aboriginal Education Consultant for the Department of Education and went on to become Superintendent of Aboriginal Education, retiring in 1988. May was committed to keeping language and stories alive, publishing four bi-lingual story books in her language, Wongutha, and English. In 2012, she told the ABC about her love of reading: "I grew up in the era when Aboriginal people were not allowed to go to public schools...we were very lucky at Mount Margaret. Even though the Education Department wasn't responsible for the education of Aboriginal children at that time, we had a mission school." "It was so exciting, learning to read and that's where I realised the power of words and reading."

May sadly passed away in 2020 at the age of 87. An inspiring woman; this beautiful mural is a tribute to her and the significant history of the school and area.

The "Together Towards the Future" Mural symbolically illustrates:

- The story of May O'Brien.
- The significance of the ANZACs in our local community.
- Immigrants' contribution to the area in the post war period.
- Our shared cultural experiences and education.

Shared cultural experiences

Immigrants contribution

ANZACS

you

inner circle

community groups

May O'Brien & female Aboriginal leaders

Family

outer community connections

shared experiences

education

our own journey lines that bring us together

Night Sky to connect May's 'Seven Sisters' book +

night sky's strong connection for Noongar people

6 seasons travel

dreamtime

food



May O'Brien's story as a leader & her impact in strengthening our community