

Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, distinguished guests and fellow graduates, thank you for the honour of bringing this Valedictory Address.

I acknowledge I am a Wakka Wakka woman and that we have come together in ceremony and celebration on Kurna Country. I pay my respects to the Elders past, present, and future, and particularly acknowledge and thank Kurna Elder Uncle Frank Wanganeen.

I stand here on the shoulders of giants, Aboriginal Christian Leaders from generations who have paved the way for me to stand on this stage. Aboriginal Christian Leaders who fought for me to be a citizen of these lands now called Australia, who fought for me to have an education beyond grade 4, and who fought for equality, justice, Reconciliation, and above all for love. Many who never had the chance to graduate from a theological college and university.

Those like William Cooper, David Uniapon, Pearl Gibbs, Sir Pastor Doug Nicholls.

Those of the present whose name, leadership and work should be celebrated in every Australian Theological College.

Uncle Rev Graham Paulson who first encouraged and invited me to a theological path. Uncle Pastor Dr Ray Minniecon who told me to get to Whitley College in 2017. Aunty Dr Professor Anne Pattel-Gray whose leadership and courage inspires. Aunty Rev Dr Denise Champion whose books Yarta Wandatha and Anaditj should be read by everyone. Aunty Jean Phillips who I dare to say is the greatest missiologist Australia has ever seen.

There are so many more Aboriginal Christian Leaders of the past and present and I wish I could name all of you, but you are all written on my heart, as we carry each other in community.

Congratulations to every graduate tonight. Graduates, as you visualise those who supported you to be here tonight and say thank you to them - family, friends, and community...

I say thank you

To my Mum and family and all watching online. To the Aboriginal Christian Leaders here tonight. To the community of Indigenous Theologians from across the world, Dr Terry Le Blanc, Dr Randy Woodley, Cheryl Bear, Shari Russell, and Jocabed Solano. To the community of NAIITS. To others like Ruth Padilla De Borst, Rev Dr Geoff Broughton, Major Sandy McLean, Rev Alison Cox. To Whitley College and the University of Divinity for giving a place and path. I am excited for the University's School of Indigenous Studies. To every teacher, staff member and student.

Theological studies can seem such an individual journey, but the true strength is knowing we do it in community and for community. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Indigenous peoples around the world have known this for thousands of years. Jesus showed us the way through his all inclusive and non-discriminating love.

So, may we take to heart, and always remember, the great words and teachings, of Kev Carmody and Paul Kelly, "Power and Privilege can not move a people".



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Brooke Lea Prentis, Graduate Diploma in Theology 2022

