



**AURORA**  
EDUCATION FOUNDATION

# 2017 Aurora Indigenous Scholars International Study Tour

## Reflections



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## A new perspective...

*Although the objective of the Study Tour is to get Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to the top universities in the world – it does more than this. The Study Tour does more than provide the participants with the opportunities to acquire the necessary skills, knowledge, and confidence to be able to study at these universities; it inspires us and our communities.*

**Chloe Ford, University of Melbourne**

*I would've never thought of the London School of Economics as an option if not for the Study Tour. I applied after embracing the culture around Aurora, which I take to be the following: take every opportunity that's afforded to you, and for those that aren't, go and seek them out. The Study Tour has changed my whole perception of academia.*

**Connor Haddad, University of Queensland**

*Walking out of the professor's office, [I felt] like I could be a fit in an internationally high-ranking University that I would have otherwise never considered.*

**Neika Lehman, University of Tasmania**

*Where I came in rather blind to Berkeley, I left adoring the place. I will absolutely apply for Berkeley with gusto. The culture of the place is perfect for me and the hive of activity gave me a strong sense of excitement on campus.*

**Blayne Welsh, La Trobe University**

*I never thought I'd say this but, yes, I could see myself studying at the best university in the world. ... The craziest thing about it is the course I'm most excited to apply for at Oxford is the MSc in Social Sciences of the Internet, which is a course I didn't know existed until I spoke to NZ Rhodes Scholar, Chris McIntyre, at the Rhodes lunch.*

**Connor Haddad, University of Queensland**

*My favourite moment from my visit to LSE was my meeting with the coordinator of one of the MSc programmes that I subsequently applied for. Despite meeting late in the afternoon, we chatted for over one hour about a range of topics relating to social policy, including the experience of the Indigenous Australian community. I was struck by his generosity and*

openness, and the experience gave me confidence that LSE students would be well supported and have the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with academics.

**Jarrod Hughes, Monash University**

## Meeting superstar academics...

*I had a fantastic academic meeting with Professor Ehlers at Oxford. I have read many of Professor Ehlers' publications and after much discussion about who I am as a person and scholar and what I want to achieve with my research we appeared to be a great match for supervision. Our meeting truly inspired me to apply.*

**Rebecca Simpson, Griffith University**

*Meeting Professor Leanne Hilton was certainly the highlight for me at Berkeley, and I'm sure will be for the entire trip. I couldn't have met a better person in my area of interest. She is a leader in this area, and her work on revitalising native/Indian languages across the US and Canada has been widely published and she has presented her research internationally. Leanne not only has many years' experience in language revitalisation, she is Native American and has experienced firsthand the same experiences we face back in our own communities and language groups.*

**Tina Raye, University of Sydney**

*All my academic meetings at Harvard gave me something new to think about. Particularly the one with Fernando Reime of the Graduate School of Education – he spent the first half of our meeting essentially testing me on why I wanted to go to Harvard and study education. It was intense and I was admittedly a bit terrified. [I was] totally relieved to see him crack a smile when I had finished ... he thought that the school would be a great fit for my aspirations.*

**Marlee Silva, University of Wollongong**

*I had some academic meetings at Harvard that really challenged my research and career decisions (in the most inspirational and thought-provoking way). I had to retreat to my room and seriously think about what had been discussed in my meetings. Harvard can provide an academic track that I would not only thrive in, I believe I could academically excel in.*

**Rebecca Simpson, Griffith University**

*I loved the meeting with Karl Jacoby at Columbia. ... His research was insightful and gave me some things to reflect upon in terms of my own interests in advancing the socio-economic needs of remote communities in Australia in a way that is culturally sensitive. ... I was able to recapture that thirst for knowledge and appreciate the opportunity that we have been granted not just in terms of our future goals, but our ability to learn things through the lecture series we get to attend.*

**Erin Richardson, University of Newcastle**



Meeting superstar academics (cont'd)...



*2017 Aurora Scholars at Trinity College, Cambridge*

*The Faculty at the Harvard Kennedy School gave frank advice that was squarely geared to ensuring I had the best possible chance of being admitted to the program, and expressed their advice in a way that made me feel as though they thought I had genuine prospects of coming to Harvard Kennedy School. ... Without a doubt it has redoubled my efforts to apply and be successfully admitted to HKS.*

**Geoffrey Winters, University of Sydney**

*At Stanford, Ayodele took the time to listen to me and explore my ideas; we discussed each other's research and academic paths and she provided me with information and advice that turned out to be invaluable. ... Having such a wonderful discussion from a place of possibilities and expansion was something I will take with me on the remainder of this Study Tour.*

**Rebecca Simpson, Griffith University**

*Our meeting with Celia Naylor at Columbia, was incredible and inspiring. She is a highly educated, accomplished, and motivated woman of colour at a leading higher education institution. This was valuable to see. I see it in Australia, and I have a strong academic network that is comprised of a range of staff members, academics, and scholars from universities around the nation. However, to be able to see women of colour leading research in their fields at top universities is incredibly powerful.*

**Chloe Ford, University of Melbourne**

## Creating and supporting a community of Indigenous scholars...

*I hope that in a couple of years' time, I am giving future scholars tours around whichever university I attend. I am honoured to be a part of the Aurora family.*

**Connor Haddad, University of Queensland**

*It's so fantastic to see our people succeeding in their fields and hearing their stories inspired me to keep striving.*

**Rebecca Simpson, Griffith University**

*Attending the Master of Public Policy mixer at Harvard with Charles Prouse showed me that there is a really close cohort of students at the University who all work to pull each other along. Witnessing this social gathering was heartening as it made me realise that there is a strong collegiate environment at Harvard and ... the other students support each other as a sort of surrogate family while you're studying abroad.*

**Erin Richardson, University of Newcastle**

*I left Oxford with a real sense that it was somewhere I would love to live and study. Meeting with the existing Indigenous scholars was an amazing experience. Those informal discussions were central to me forming the view that Oxford was somewhere not only I want to study but also where I might have a chance of getting into.*

**Geoffrey Winters, University of Sydney**

*I loved the opportunities to mix with other scholars while on the trip, but at Oxford this was something particularly special. I had some really helpful discussions and also some deeper discussions about the challenges of fitting into an elite environment. ... I will always look back on this lunch quite fondly and I think that it helped me a lot with discovering my ultimate academic and personal goals, and how I can integrate these two.*

**Erin Richardson, University of Newcastle**

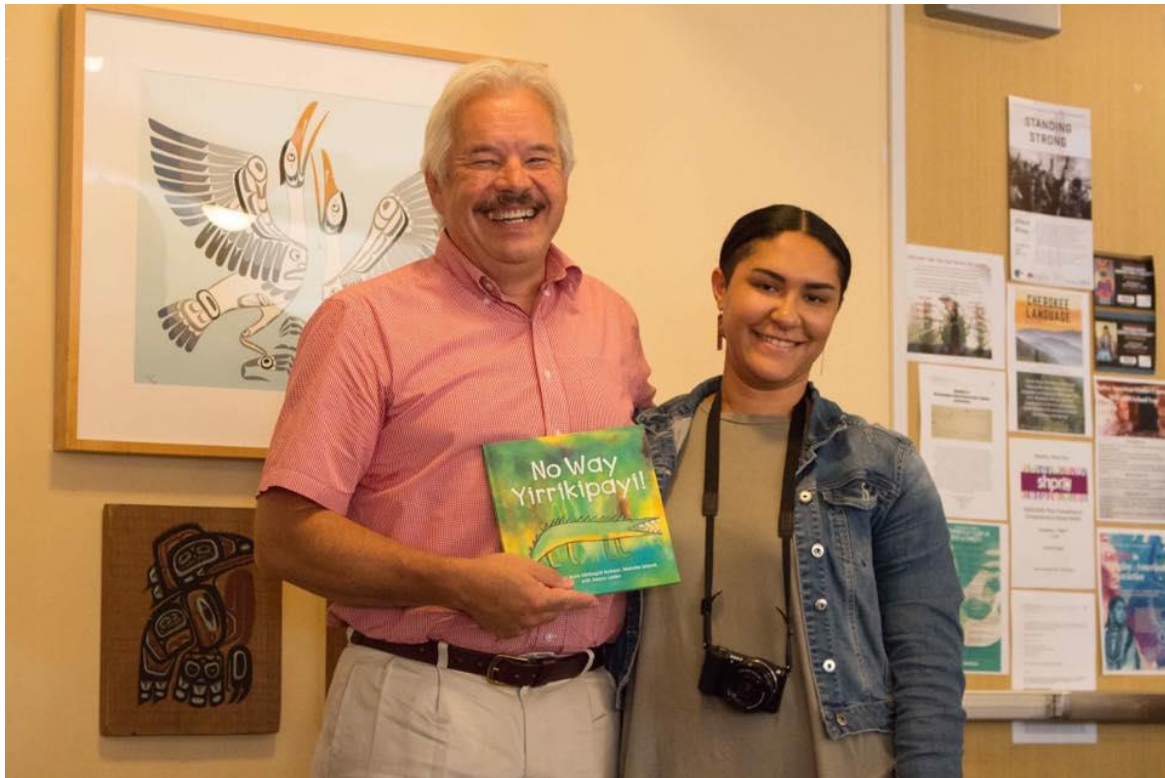
*It was amazing to spend so much time with the American Indian Graduate Program and to get an Indigenous perspective about the campus and university life in Berkeley. It definitely felt like we would have a community and a safe place if we chose to attend Berkeley.*

**Lauren Hutchinson, Queensland University of Technology**

*The tour the Berkeley Native Centre provided was such a massive privilege and really helped me picture myself studying there. I loved the effort put into making us feel welcome, and the tour of campus that was rich with resistance, struggles, successes, and fights for visibility.*

**Neika Lehman, University of Tasmania**

Creating and supporting a community of Indigenous scholars (cont'd)...



*Jenna-Maree presenting Greg Graves, Assistant Dean Stanford Native American Cultural Center, with No Way Yirrkipayi – a book written and illustrated by children from the Tiwi Islands.*

*It's always very special to connect with our First Nations brothers and sisters abroad, so to have the opportunity to do this was invaluable. The visit certainly changed my perception ... it made me think realistically about studying at Berkeley. Being on campus, meeting the Native American staff and students, being immersed within the culture that is Berkeley, and the surrounding neighborhood, really helped to shape my Berkeley experience.*

***Jenna-Maree Jacob, Queensland University of Technology***

*Meeting current graduate students fosters a sense of belonging and community spirit, subsequently invoking this idea that we can do this; we can be ivy league alumni if we wish, and more importantly, we can be Indigenous ivy league alumni.*

***Erin Richardson, University of Newcastle***

**A world of opportunities...**

*The Aurora Study Tour has inspired me to push myself even further academically and professionally.*

***Connor Haddad, University of Queensland***

A world of opportunities (cont'd)...

*Overall, the Study Tour was an amazing experience. I feel much more confident in myself and what I'd like to achieve in the next few years.*

**Samara King, University of Western Australia**

*My meetings with both academics and admissions inspired me to achieve first class Honours in 2018 and apply to Columbia for the 2019 admissions round.*

**Rebecca Simpson, Griffith University**

*Being able to attend and watch 3 or so hours of actual student work [at Columbia] was amazing. Not only did it show that this is the type of training I crave but also demonstrated to me that I do have a strong enough level of skill in my craft to be a competitive candidate to the program and that, ultimately, I do belong and deserve to be there.*

**Blayne Welsh, La Trobe University**

*Every step we take makes the staircase a little easier to climb for the next person. We are climbing the steps that have been laid by the people that came before us, and it is up to us to lay the next steps for the people that will come after us.*

**Chloe Ford, University of Melbourne**

*Prior to attending Dr Bob Fullilove's class and meeting with him, I'd somewhat ruled out the PhD program in Public Health at Columbia. However, speaking to him and hearing about the work that he was doing in prisons here was incredible. Dr Fullilove encouraged me to apply, and made it clear that he'd like to work with me, which was exciting! Meeting with Faculty confirmed that Columbia is where I need to be to grow as an academic in my field.*

**Natalie Ironfield, University of Melbourne**

*Berkeley is a serious option for my graduate study. My experience with an academic here gave a new level of clarification around what my graduate study might look like, what my choices are and how Berkeley might be able to assist me in reaching my academic and career goals.*

**Marlee Silva, University of Wollongong**

*This Study Tour is helping me find my voice in academia: a prospect I never considered until now.*

**Connor Haddad, University of Queensland**



A world of opportunities (cont'd)...

*Before visiting Columbia, I would never have thought that I would get selected for a PhD program at this Ivy League university. I now have the confidence to apply to Columbia, and truly believe that I would be a competitive candidate.*

**Natalie Ironfield, University of Melbourne**



*Aurora Scholars Jenna-Maree Jacob, Shakara Liddelow-Hunt and Neika Lehman with Fred Myers, Silver Professor in Anthropology at New York University and President of the American Ethnological Society*

*I could 100% see myself studying at NYU after my meetings with Faye Ginsburg, Fred Meyers and Jane Anderson. Faye told me that my research was exactly in line with what they study and advocate for there; they said I'd be a perfect fit! Hearing that was amazing but also a little scary... Suddenly I'm now seriously considering a PhD when I had told myself it was a Masters next. I can see myself studying there and contributing to the next generation of scholarly work in Indigenous media.*

**Neika Lehman, University of Tasmania**

*Not only has the Study Tour benefited me in carving out a future path, but it has also made me excited to do my Honours next year.*

**Connor Haddad, University of Queensland**



A world of opportunities (cont'd)...

*I can envision myself pursuing further study at Oxford in the future. The visit was really eye opening in this regard. Without the opportunity to visit Oxford and meet with academics working within my field, there is no way I would have considered undertaking further postgraduate study at Oxford. This is now a serious possibility. ... I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to meet with Professor Bosworth in person, and am sure that this meeting will be advantageous when applying in 2019.*

**Natalie Ironfield, University of Melbourne**

*I'm incredibly grateful and humbled to be able to travel the world and visit some of its leading universities. The preparation, the conversations, the events – it was all very tiring but extremely rewarding, and a once in a lifetime opportunity that I will never forget.*

**Jenna-Maree Jacob, Queensland University of Technology**

*Thank you for allowing me to be part of such a life changing opportunity. It's a surreal experience that can be quite overwhelming and exhausting at times. But I absolutely loved every bit of it. I have never considered studying overseas but now I have visited so many amazing universities, the thought of studying in the US is a real possibility. I feel I have a lot to process now that I'm back in Australia and I'm looking forward to what may come out of it.*

**Tina Raye, University of Sydney**

*I will remember and cherish these past five weeks for the rest of my life. I'm sad that it's coming to an end, but excited that it's only just beginning. I can't wait to not only see what I do from here, but every person on this Tour. I hope the Study Tour lives on for years and years. Being a part of the Study Tour is sincerely one of the most impactful experiences I have ever had.*

**Connor Haddad, University of Queensland**

*As a young Aboriginal woman from Darwin, I think it is important to show other young people that the world does extend beyond the borders of the Territory and that there is a world of opportunities waiting for them. ... Visiting the universities on the Study Tour was amazing and the opportunities to speak to academics, admissions, other members of faculty, and staff members was incredible. It was a truly valuable and life changing experience.*

**Chloe Ford, University of Melbourne**



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