

MARYANN BIN-SALLIK (Dean NTU & CDU 2001-2008)

01 MaryAnn Bin-Sallik: Her Story

As a young woman growing up in Darwin there wasn't very many opportunities for indigenous women. We were expected to be domestics and I decided I wasn't going to.

But if I had been told that I was going to be a nurse I wouldn't have believed you. Had I been told I was going to go to university I wouldn't have believed you. If I was told that I was going to come back to Darwin as a professor at the Northern Territory University I would have thought you were completely mad. Those things were beyond my wildest dreams.

02 MaryAnn Bin-Sallik on: Starting at NTU in 2001

I came back to Darwin in - after leaving in 1974 I came back to live in 2001. I came back specifically to work for the university. The university brought me back and I was appointed Ranger Chair and Dean of Faculty - of the Faculty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

It was great to come back. It was very challenging because the Northern Territory University had been restructured. It had had a review by Bob Collins. And one of the reviews was to get rid of the faculty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and it was a real political hot bed. It didn't happen because there was a lot of opposition, political pressure from Indigenous communities - around the world actually. So it stayed but a lot of it had been cut out. So I came back to a University that was reeling.

03 MaryAnn Bin-Sallik on: The Transition from NTU to CDU 2002

I worked with Ron McKay for a year - just over a year. And then there was a decision to change the university to Charles Darwin University. The interim Vice Chancellor was Ken McKinnon. These were exciting days because we knew we were going to build a new university. And for me, when we changed to Charles Darwin University we got our own identity - we became global. And all eyes were upon us - people were very excited about that. There were a lot of grumbings because people - human beings don't like change. But there were some of us who liked challenges and liked change - and I had nothing to lose - I wanted to build up the indigenous section and get it all central.

04 MaryAnn Bin-Sallik on: CDU and Indigenous Education

Helen Garnett was very pro-active with Indigenous education she stood no nonsense. If she said it would be done - it would be done - and I mean I just loved her for that. She was the first Vice Chancellor to not just go to GARMA festival, she participated and worked there.

I negotiated with the Larrakia people because we had to get the community back involved. So negotiated with them to give us a Larrakia name for the support program, on the Darwin campus, on the Palmerston campus, and then we got one in Alice Springs, and the Katherine campus. They were all given Indigenous names. It was symbolic - of the people - and it made the people whose land it was on - it gave them some pride and some confidence in the University - so that was one of the big ones.

05 MaryAnn Bin-Sallik on: getting a Pro Vice Chancellor of Indigenous Leadership

All the time I worked with her I kept pushing for a Pro Vice Chancellor. I didn't believe that we had a voice at the highest level that we needed. Just before I left she said that the next person would be a Pro Vice Chancellor. So it took me four years but we got there and I'm very proud of that. And especially as the Pro Vice Chancellor is a Darwin boy.

06 MaryAnn Bin-Sallik on: Batchelor Institute

Professor Garnet was very good at making decisions and very difficult ones - she never shirked responsibilities. She made very good decisions in relation to Indigenous education. I believe she did. I think she had the hard task...when she was here the Federal Government had been wanting the antecedent university - the Northern Territory University and Batchelor to work better together. because it was quite expensive - we had overlaps in courses and it was resisted on both sides - and Helen made it happen.

07 MaryAnn Bin-Sallik on: Marcia Langton and NTU in the 1990s

I wasn't the first Ranger Chair. My position was a new position that they didn't have before. I had come to take over from Associate Professor Isaac Brown because he was retiring and Professor Marcia Langton was the first Ranger Chair. So Marcia was appointed to be the Ranger Chair of CINCRM - the Centre for Indigenous Natural Resource Management. She just made a major contribution. She would be our foremost Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander intellectual in the country. She was before her time. She was brighter than most people she encountered [laughs] so they found it very difficult and she never suffered fools gladly. She knew what she wanted to do - and she'd do it - take no prisoners. But you know if you worked with her you would really know how wonderful she really was. She got the resource management from Certificate four right up to undergraduate degrees and postgraduate degrees. So you could go right through in natural cultural resource management. And she also got the researchers - Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers - to go out to Arnhem Land to work closely with the people on the ground and to document the Indigenous names for their ethno botany. She started

the Certificate four in Rangers - the most famous are the Jirat {?} Rangers and Maningrida - that was Marcia's legacy. She shook things - she shook the very foundations of the university. Marcia's Marcia and she hasn't changed. But she has made a magnificent contribution to Indigenous affairs and i have a lot of respect for her.

08 MaryAnn Bin-Sallik on: Reflections

The ten year celebration of Charles Darwin University is very important to me because I was able to participate at the forefront - working directly with Ken McKinnon and Helen and the Pro Vice Chancellors -Charles Webb, Don Zoellner and all of them. It was challenging times and I love a challenge.

It was very exciting times because we were able to - not just me, as a group, collegiate - we were able to cement a place at this university for Indigenous education and for Indigenous people. It was until we became Charles Darwin University do I believe that Indigenous people had a voice at this University.

There is a visibility of Indigenous graduates from this university and I think that is important to say - and across the nation.

I think that Aboriginal Higher Education is in a good place now - right across the country. People have to be given the opportunities to finish their doctorates. And I think this University is very good because its allowed that. It has started to take on and I think that will be one of Barney's legacies.

09 MaryAnn Bin-Sallik on: Becoming an Emeritus Professor

I retires in June 2008 and I was made an Emeritus Professor of Charles Darwin University. Which makes me the third Indigenous Emeritus Professor in the country and the first woman. I was the first Indigenous person to work in Higher Education. It was a culmination of my career and it was a great honour - and one that I'm very proud of.