

Daring to Dream

My Story: Riki Salam

Brisbane, Queensland

helped shape the person I am today. To not have that support and presence of family would be very hard and indeed lonely.

Loss of identity and not knowing who your family or people are and where you come from is a huge issue with devastating consequences. It affects so many people within both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities which is a very, very sad thing.

What is your education?

Growing up in Cairns I went to a little school in the heart of the city called Cairns Central State School which is sadly no longer there, the buildings were knocked down and the land sold to Japanese investors to build resort based accommodation on - where's your sense of history Queensland Government? From there I attended Cairns State High School from Year 8 to 10 and went to Weipa North State High midway through that year which I enjoyed very much. The next year I returned to Cairns to repeat Year 10 at Saint Augustines College through to Year 12. After Year 12 I moved to Brisbane and attended various design short courses as I always had an interest in both design and art, before completing a certificate of Visual Art and Design at the Morningside TAFE College which went for a year. Soon after that I was offered a job on the Gold Coast as an in-house designer, which I took, and as they say in the classics the rest is history.

Where do you work and what do you like most about your job?

I work (if you can call it that) for an Indigenous Creative Agency called Gilimbaa headed up by David Williams and Amanda Lear. Gilimbaa is a Wakka Wakka word that means 'today'. Representing Indigenous Culture strong, present and excellent, today, utilising the technology of today to best represent our cultures. Besides interacting with a small and extremely hilarious group of talented individuals the thing I enjoy most about my 'job' (if you can call it that) (BTW - BJE - or Best Job Ever) is learning, educating and promoting our culture to a mainstream audience that may otherwise would never have had the opportunity to engage and learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Culture.

What do you enjoy doing outside of work (favourite pastime)?

I enjoy spending time most of all with family and friends. I also enjoy going to the beach and surfing (stand up) and if I



Who's your mob?

My mob are the Salam's from up Cairns way. My Dad Robert 'Bob' Salam was born on Moa Island (St. Pauls) in the Torres Strait before moving down to Mossman and then to Cairns (via Christchurch New Zealand where my mother is from) and eventually settling back down in Cairns where I was born.

Maudie Salam nee Savage is my grandmother, she married a Melanesian man Hardie Salam, my dato or grandfather. Like many blackfellas we have a very extended and diverse family tree which I am very proud of. I'm almost certain that I am related in one way or another to half the Torres mob and beyond. I am the youngest of 4 children in my immediate family - I have 2 older brothers and 1 older sister.

What's your fondest memory growing up in Cairns as a youth?

My fondest memories growing up in Cairns in particular was going to all the different waterholes, creeks and rivers surrounding the Cairns area with the family. On those long, hot, humid days in summer we would always beg our parents to take us to Freshwater, Stoney Creek or Crystal Cascades which was my favourite place of all. Sometimes we would be there the whole day from morning until late afternoon with only a fishing line and a loaf of bread for lunch - so you had to be pretty resourceful and know how to catch a fish or two. Luckily my brothers were expert fishermen and we never went without fresh fish cooked on an open fire.

What does the term family mean to you?

My family and extended family is very important to me, they help keep me grounded and are always there with support and guidance when needed. Family is who I am and they have



can combine all these elements then it's a win-win situation.

What is your favourite meal?

Freshly caught mud crabs wrapped in alfoil and cooked on an open coal fire.

What are you currently reading?

A lot of art and design based books at the moment. One in particular is called Design Thinking - which goes through the intricacies of considering and delivering design, showcasing various case studies and processes of some of Australia's top design agencies. A good read and very informative if you're into that kind of thing?

What is your best all time favourite movie that you've seen?

So many to choose from but if I was going to go for an epic I would have to say *Gladiator*. Mel Gibson's *Apocalypto* was great too - very detailed and in depth look into everyday Mayan culture.

What sport do you play or follow?

I played rugby league and basketball growing up in Cairns so they will always be on the agenda particularly league especially with such an historic game of Origin where Queensland dominated yet again and Greg Inglis had a truly outstanding game. On a local level I am enjoying watching my son play soccer. He is currently playing for under 8's and as a result I enjoy watching the World Cup which is currently on - I really hope Australia gets through these next couple of matches, to meet Germany in the first game was very unfortunate. My back up teams are Holland and the Ivory Coast.

What would you like to be doing in 10 years time?

If I'm not doing the same thing I would love to be painting and letter pressing in a studio in the backyard of my beach shack somewhere along the coast if possible, enjoying the sounds of the ocean and smelling the saltwater in the air.