

Uncle Yidumduma Bill Harney

Vice-Chancellor,

I have the pleasure of presenting Uncle Yidumduma Bill Harney with an Honorary Doctor of Letters today on beautiful Jawoyn, Dagoman and Wardaman Country.

As an esteemed Elder and Senior Custodian of the Wardaman people, Yidumduma has long been a respected figure within his communities and beyond.

Many of you may already be familiar with his artistic talents, from his captivating paintings, which are displayed in galleries across Australia, including the CDU Art Gallery, and worldwide. A valued custodian, his art not only showcases the beauty of Wardaman culture but also serves as a bridge between worlds, inviting us all to connect with the rich tapestry of his heritage.

But Yidumduma's contributions extend far beyond the realm of art. A 'bush professor', his deep understanding of Wardaman customary law and cosmology, and enthusiasm to share this knowledge through songs, stories, books, and media is deeply admired. Yidumduma's masterful storytelling has also preserved the story and rock art of the lightning brothers,

ancestral beings from the Dreamtime who bring rain to Wardaman country. Through his tireless efforts to educate and enlighten, he has become a cherished ambassador for his culture, both nationally and internationally.

Yidumduma is also a strong campaigner for the land rights of his people, winning rights for the cattle station at Menngen in 1999 – land which he continues to manage today as Chair of Wardaman Aboriginal Corporation.

In the eyes of many, Yidumduma is a living treasure, a custodian of heritage, and a symbol of resilience and strength.

In recognition of his significant contributions to preserving Wardaman culture and sharing his knowledge with the Australian public, Charles Darwin University Council awards Yidumduma Bill Harney the title of Honorary Doctor of Letters.