

Talking with Scott Darlow

Formerly a high school teacher, Scott is an Aboriginal man from Yorta Yorta country who uses his guitar, didgeridoo and voice to connect with people and to educate and inspire them to be passionate about Aboriginal culture and reconciliation.

You're a proud Yorta Yorta man. What does your Aboriginal culture mean to you?

My culture means a huge amount. It's the core of who I am as a man, and it connects me to the past, and the future. It influences and shapes my views, my opinions and my goals as a human.

What led you to music? What is the part it plays in your life and what doors has it opened for you?

I started playing the cornet at the age of 5. My parents were Salvation Army Officers and my earliest memories are Church and brass bands. I was desperate to play the trombone but my arms couldn't manage the slide! So I got a cornet. I remember taking it home and the surprised response of adults who heard me pick it up and get a sound out of it straight away. I was playing in bands with adults by the time I was 8. From there I began guitar at

school when I was about 9, and it just kicked on from there. Saxophone in uni, and clarinet and singing from there.

These days it's just singing, guitar and didgeridoo. Music has been a huge thing in my life, but as much as I love it, it has only ever been a vehicle to open doors and share my culture and the passion I have for reconciliation. It's amazing that we live in a world where people will listen to your opinions and thoughts if they like your music. Bono, for example, has changed more people's lives for the better than any politician in the last 50 years. So on a much smaller scale, I want to do the same. I want to see Australians educated and inspired to close the gap, and my music is the vehicle that allows me to do that.

Your school sessions are a fascinating mix - part history, part social justice, part personal development - all underpinned by music and story. How have you evolved this? What is your central message?

My school sessions began 6 months after I left teaching (I taught high school kids for 2 and a half years). I actually called my old boss and asked if I could come and play



music and talk about Aboriginal culture to the kids. So I went and did it and it was great. From there I went away and refined it a little and then booked more schools. This went on over the next 12 months and eventually I quit all the formal teaching I was doing (I was still teaching music part time) and took up playing and speaking in high schools around Australia. Ten years later, I'm still at it, and the crux of my message is that if every person chooses to show 10% more 'FLUTE' to every person they encounter, they'll be history makers. FLUTE is an acronym that stands for Forgiveness, Love, Understanding, Tolerance and Empathy. I also promote and encourage students and teachers to look at World Visions program "Linking Hands" for which I'm a spokesman.

Over the past 10 years or so years you've been travelling throughout Australia and overseas, have you noticed a change in peoples' understanding of, or attitudes to, Aboriginal people and their history and culture? How, if any?

I think the generation coming through now are, on the whole, more understanding and tolerant than any generation before them. I am really excited when I get emails from kids on Facebook and Twitter, telling me that they have been sharing the things they learned with their families and their parents are then, in turn, changing their opinions. That's exciting.

You have an ambassadorial role with World Vision. Can you paint a picture of what this entails and why it's important to you?

World Vision's program Linking Hands is sensational. It's community driven and community lead, and it's done with a long term and sustainable approach that doesn't rely on the whim of a politician's funding. It is focused on education and health, and I've seen first-hand the huge difference it is making. So the fact that there is an organisation out there that are actively, lovingly closing the gap, in a real way, is something I want to tell as many people about as possible!

Who/what are your inspirations for the life you lead and things you do?

My people. My elders. My family and my kids. I want them to know their dad was the best man he could possibly be. I often get things wrong, but the goal of my life is to, each day in some way, be a better man than I was the day before.

Give us your initial, quick-fire responses to these words:

Family = Most important thing

Reconciliation = slowly happening

Forgiveness = the most powerful thing a human being can do

Close the Gap = Crucial, embarrassing and not happening nearly fast enough

Knowledge = Power

If people who attend your music and reconciliation workshops take away ONE thing to remember and act upon, what do you hope it would be?

FL.U.T.E. - and the hope that they apply it in their lives on a daily basis. That they ask themselves who they need to forgive and how they can love more. For them to show more understanding, more tolerance and, ultimately, demonstrate more empathy for those around them.

You've worked with some diverse people in your career so far (recording a version of 'Solid Rock' with Shane Howard and featuring your cousin and former AFL footballer David Wirrpanda on your track 'Sorry'). Who would you most love to collaborate with in the future and why?

I'd love to tour with John Butler. He is inspirational for so many reasons. An indi artist, he's made a huge difference for our people. And his music is freaking awesome.

Thanks for your time Scott.

Scott's new album, 'Darlow' is available now on itunes. Scott can be booked to visit your school - see www.teachinghistoryaustralia.com or email enquiries@teachinghistoryaustralia.com for more details.