

By Bianca Manning

Aboriginal Studies Major Project – Indigenous Hip Hop.

Report:

I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land. I pay my respects to our elders, our ancestors and all of those who have gone before us, and I acknowledge all Australians in all our diversity.

In looking at the history of Australia, we see the dramatic and horrible impacts that stemmed from the dispossession of Aboriginal people from their land- land which they held a deep spiritual, economic and cultural connection to. Now, after 200+ years of discrimination and injustice, many Aboriginal people in this nation are stuck in a cycle of poverty and disadvantage in areas such as health, employment, education, housing and crime. To move forward, cultural identity needs to grow. Hip hop is one medium that can be used to reach out to the Indigenous youth of this country to provide hope and identity.

Hip hop music can be: positive- where positive themes motivate us to do positive things, we can express ourselves creatively and it can educate people on social, political and cultural issues in society; or negative- where negative themes can motivate us to do negative things eg. Drug, alcohol and violent references and offensive language. Hip hop is a diverse genre of music and I will be investigating how Indigenous hip hop can send positive messages to our youth.

Joel Wentiong from 'The Last Kinection' described his view of hip hop music to me in an interview: "Hip hop in all its forms relates to making something from nothing, from the grassroots which seems to influence our mob, not only with seeing other blackfaces on TV etc. but also the tradition of oral story telling which is what the music and rapping does. As does all vocalists, but there is something about the art of rapping that inspires and influences. The Bling and Fame is a big factor, but Mob gotta know that it's all gammin and fake and the smart rappers are the rich ones. Smart in that they are great business peoples, went to school etc."

Indigenous Hip Hop Artists:

The Last Kinection

The Last Kinection is an Indigenous hip hop group from Newcastle, NSW, consisting of brother and sister Joel and Naomi Wenitong and DJ Jay Tee. The Last Kinection formed in 2006 and uses their music to entertain, empower and motivate their listeners. Their songs focus on real issues occurring within Indigenous Australia including: political and social justice for Aboriginal people; keeping a positive attitude towards life; being proud of your culture and relationships and resilience. Some of their lyrics include: 'I know where I'm from I know where my heart is, no matter what they say I'm gonna shine regardless', 'statistics

By Bianca Manning

say that I won't make the predicted day of life expectancy compared to the average aussie that grew up next door to me'; 'raise the flag, resuscitate your clan'; 'I think and pick myself up, dust myself off, coz anything less than 100% will be my own loss'; 'I will not give up yet, I will not feel regret' and 'don't let the small stuff get you down'. The Last Kinection add many cultural elements into their music such as traditional beats, rhythms and some lyrics in Aboriginal languages. The group run workshops around NSW using their music to promote health, education, self-esteem and leadership.¹

In an interview with Joel Wenitong, I gained insight into how he wished to influence young people through his music, Joes believes that "not much has changed in the context of police harassment, racism, education, employment and issues of or lack of identity- many of these issues are not entirely the responsibility of young blackfullas, but they need to understand and know how to deal with it and use it to their own advantage. I use these issues in pretty much all my songs, it helps me deal with it, but also teach others about some of the issues we go through and how I think is best to deal with it....."Steal their Jobs not their money" is something I live by." In response to the question, 'what are the main messages you wish to put out through your music?' Joel replied, "Anything I go through, our Mob will always use oral language to pass down knowledge and history, and Hip Hop is a way to do this. Right now, passing down the importance of education to beat the rest of the population at their own game is my emphasis".

The Last Kinection are role models for all Indigenous people and are doing a great thing in our communities to help young people live their dreams.

Street Warriors

The Street Warriors are an Indigenous hip hop duo from Newcastle consisting of brothers Abie and Warwick Wright. As stated on their website, 'The Street Warriors are well respected pioneers of Indigenous hip hop who have built a loyal following around Australia on the back of their energy filled live shows, poignant lyrics and their positive lifestyle messages culminating in Deadly Award winning nominations and performances.' The brothers are passionate about helping Indigenous youth as they: are involved in hip hop workshops to promote self-esteem in youth, including the 'Vibe3on3 Hip Hop Workshop' held in Newcastle; are the first Indigenous hip hop ambassadors for APRA and the Indigenous sector of the Australian Electoral Commission's program which aims to help Aboriginal youth and raise up more Indigenous leaders to make changes for our people, and are members of the Awabakal group, a Newcastle literacy NGO.²

In an interview with the Street Warriors, Abie and Wok explained how important they believe Indigenous hip hop is to youth. Abie thinks "I think it's a voice that our communities and our younger people have got now in regards to there are a lot of different workshops

¹ <http://www.lastkinection.com/>

² <http://streetwarriors.com.au/>

By Bianca Manning

that are going around the country and workshops have been a good thing for our kids around the country. It's helping get them messages out, positive messages as well. I know that there has been some guys that have been doing it for years around the country and now it's opening right up so there's a lot of work for a lot of different people and I think the government can recognise that it's a positive outlet for the younger generations as well". He says "we're gonna talk like this and we're gonna rap like this and we're gonna put our traditional customs and segments and ways we do things into our music as well. So I think it's just making the younger generations prouder of who they are and where they come from and that's shown in a lot of the... top Indigenous acts that have influenced a lot of the younger generations now and still are influencing them." Wok thinks that "the more of our mob that are getting up performing whether it be as rap performers or traditional or country or whatever it is, the more people that are happy to go out there and put themselves out there, it just makes them stronger. So whether or not they pursue careers in music or dance or whatever it is I think it help them in life so it gives them the confidence to go for maybe a job that they might not have felt comfortable going for or even just interacting with different people. I just think music's a good tool and I think it's been helping our people for hundreds and thousands of years and it's gonna keep on helping, song and dance, I think we're a pretty musical mob, I don't think that'll change."

Programs and Organisations:

Various initiatives, programs and organisations around Australia use hip hop as a medium for sending out positive messages to Indigenous youth.

Indigenous Hip Hop Projects

Indigenous Hip Hop Projects (IHHP) is an organisation that combines traditional Aboriginal culture with hip hop dance and music/media to encourage and send positive messages to Indigenous youth. They travel around Australia to different schools and events in urban, regional and remote areas. IHHP run workshops which involve learning and creating dances and songs. Then the kids gain performing skills, self-confidence, learn positive social behaviours and creatively express themselves.³ IHHP are linked with: Youth Beyond Blue which focusses on helping youth with depression; Wunan, an Aboriginal development program aiming to improve socio-economic factors for Indigenous people⁴; and Mibbinbah who aim to empower Indigenous males⁵. As stated in their website, 'IHHP works closely with elders, schools, local health services and local councils to introduce skills and resources to enable long term, sustainable, community development'.

³ <http://www.indigenoushipop.com/about.html>

⁴ <http://wunan.org.au/about>

⁵ <http://www.mibbinbah.org/>

By Bianca Manning

Move It Mob Style

Move It Mob Style, hosted by Brotha Black and Naomi Wenitong, began in 2012 and is a dance-based health and fitness program run on NITV and ABC3 TV. It incorporates fun hip hop dance routines with the latest beats from Indigenous hip hop artists. Move It Mob Style travels around Australia to showcase the countries great talent. Viewers are encouraged to get off the couch, grab a water bottle and join in the dancing, as routines are shown four times. Throughout each program, various health and cultural stories are added to promote healthy living and cultural identity for Indigenous youth.⁶

In a questionnaire I performed, 100% of the respondents (young Indigenous Australians) answered that they: enjoy listening to hip hop music and hip hop dancing; believe hip hop is an influential factor for young Indigenous people; and agreed that hip hop can be used to send positive messages to young people.

Australia is a diverse country with a rich cultural heritage. Around this country, hip hop music and dance is being used to reach out to Indigenous youth to bring positive messages of health, education, resilience, strength, cultural identity and achieving their goals. This can be shown through the music of 'The Last Kinection' and the 'Street Warriors', and the programs 'Indigenous Hip Hop Projects' and 'Move It Mobstyle'.

⁶ <http://www.vibe.com.au/moveitmobstyle/>

Aboriginal Studies Major Project- Bianca Manning

INDIGENOUS HIP HOP

Bibliography

Pictures:

Aboriginal flag – ausflag.com.au

Hip Hop image - allaussiehiphop.com

Hip Hop image - just-mygoal.blogspot.com

The Last Kinection image-

<https://encryptedtbn0.google.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcT6AXDyfYTBx9Mu5fMrdBCyRhjYvT75dIHnezaUGock5myFxZ8XCw>

The Last Kinection image- <https://encrypted->

[tbn1.google.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcTFmz6N0LaHHRH-yP4wvXh_SEy-ORp_b6YrKDPwCTgqIwpuZ2tc6g](https://encrypted-tbn1.google.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcTFmz6N0LaHHRH-yP4wvXh_SEy-ORp_b6YrKDPwCTgqIwpuZ2tc6g)

The Last Kinection image-

<https://encryptedtbn0.google.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcRZDqUdbrlcT6qled2yPzyrJlkrIrGFmUyxRIA1sBitXPEvcNb6fA>

Street Warriors image-

http://www.newcastlemusic.com/images/Street_Warriors_Single_Shot_400.jpg

Aboriginal Australia map -<https://encrypted->

[tbn0.google.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcTiO83Tg8JsWEHdWETOQKCiX13X30KuwGSJah9wDR6AmP1BE61k5Q](https://encrypted-tbn0.google.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcTiO83Tg8JsWEHdWETOQKCiX13X30KuwGSJah9wDR6AmP1BE61k5Q)

Indigenous Hip Hip Projects image- <https://encrypted->

[tbn1.google.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQ5t2ex5YIEB4w4AcFIVftdjeeEGu_kaETLtlFCKRhGFW2YBD0QWg](https://encrypted-tbn1.google.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQ5t2ex5YIEB4w4AcFIVftdjeeEGu_kaETLtlFCKRhGFW2YBD0QWg)

Move It Mobstyle image- abc.net.au

Move It Mobstyle image- vibe.com.au