

## **Indigenous Women and Creative Traditions: Transforming Lives through Radical Practice**

A University of Southern Queensland (USQ) program to explore the parallel experiences of women from indigenous peoples, Chicana and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, will commence in Toowoomba this week.

'Indigenous Women and Creative Traditions: Transforming Lives through Radical Practice' will feature an art exhibition, panel and a series of lectures on topics such as cultures, identity, and experiences of colonisation.

It begins this Friday (June 24) with the art exhibition 'Days of the Dead: Living, Recalling Spirit and Ancestors', connecting Chicana (women of Mexican-American heritage) and Aboriginal women artists and scholars.

USQ Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Jan Thomas said the exhibition would be curated by the University's Alma Cervantes and Megan Darr.

"It will feature their work as well as that of Robyn Heckenberg, Kim Walmsley, Chris Kelly, and California State University Northridge's (CSUN) Professor Yreina D. Cervantez and Professor Lara Medina," Professor Thomas said.

"This is a great initiative and I thank all participants for their involvement. I look forward to gaining a greater understanding through this collaboration."

Ms Cervantes said it was a cross-cultural dialogue drawing on traditions that were embodied but also practices for recalling the work of ancestors and spiritualities.

"An admiration for each other's experiences has developed between the two communities, especially around colonization, as well as the practises, both in academic writing and in art, that have contributed to strengthening our communities," she said.

Mrs Megan Darr, USQ Student Services and Social Justice, said the most exciting part of the exhibition was how empowering it was for indigenous women around the world.

"It's empowering seeing the endurance through the pieces, to see the similar practices which demonstrate respect for ancestral teachings and ceremony across both peoples. The Chicana and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people celebrate and acknowledge those who have walked before us," she said.

Professor Yreina D. Cervantez and Professor Lara Medina from CSUN will hold a series of lectures, and will also participate in a panel next Tuesday (June 28) called 'A Cross Cultural and Intergenerational Dialogue'. It will be hosted by Dr Kathryn Gilbey from USQ's College for Indigenous Studies, Education and Research (CISER).

Discussion will focus on the way in which decolonizing practices allow for healing, reconnection and the embrace of Indigenous women's world views.

The program has been sponsored by CISER, CSUN, USQ RedTrain, USQ Artsworx, and USQ Social Justice.

PROGRAMMING:

Art Exhibition - Days of the Dead: Living, Recalling Spirit and Ancestors  
Friday June 24 2016, 6:00pm

The Dias de los Muertos or Day of the Dead exhibit travels the Pacific Ocean divide to share and explore Mexican and Xicana/o Indigenous ceremonial art and tradition. Dias de los Muertos is a ceremony of remembrance and connection to Chicana/o ancestors. This reclaimed celebration by Chicanas/os and Latinas/os in the USA is inspired from the traditions, cultures and spiritual beliefs of the Indigenous peoples of Mexico and Latino America, as well as the imposed colonial influences of the Spanish Christian/Catholic religion. These traditions are found in the artworks of Yreina D. Cervantez Lara Medina. The exhibition will also feature work from local Indigenous artists. The exhibit involves a cross cultural exchange and collaboration between Chicana artists and scholars and First Nations women artists and scholars.

The Medicine of Historical Memory: "The" Chicana/o Experience – Lecture by Professor Lara Medina  
Monday June 27 2016, 10:00am – 11:00am

'Indigenous Art of Death: Ceremony, Ritual Healing and Reclamation' - Lecture by Professor Yreina D. Cervantez and Professor Lara Medina  
Tuesday June 28 2016, 10:00am – 11:00am

Panel - A Cross Cultural and Intergenerational Dialogue  
Tuesday June 28 2016, 11:30am – 12:30pm

'Lightening in the Blood: Reclaiming Identity and Xicana Power' - Lecture by Professor Yreina D. Cervantez  
Wednesday June 29 2016, 10:00am – 11:00am

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