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2022 black&write! Fellowship winners announced

A modern coming-of-age tale and a story with a culturally significant moral lesson have elevated two First Nations writers to secure black&write! Fellowships for 2022.

The 2022 winners were announced at a State Library of Queensland ceremony today.

Queensland Elder Herbert Wharton and Lay Maloney from Victoria were each awarded \$10,000 fellowships.

Herbert Wharton is a stockman-turned writer and a descendant of the Kooma people. He started writing poetry and yarn-like novels in his fifties and has published short story collections, poetry, and a young adult novel.

His winning manuscript, 'Bird Kingdom' follows Gundu, a mischievous young boy who thinks he and his cat can hunt all the birds of the sky. When Gundu is suddenly transported to the bird kingdom, he faces the consequences of his actions.

Lay Maloney, a Gumbaynggirr and Gunggandji person of South Sea Islander descent was born in Cairns and raised in Yarrabah. Lay is a storyteller with a focus on writing and illustrating.

Lay's debut work 'Weaving Us Together' is a young adult manuscript about a non-binary Aboriginal person named Jean growing up on Australia's mid-north coast. The story follows Jean through adolescence as they transverse the ups and downs of life; including finding family, healing trauma, and figuring out who they are.

The winners will receive prize money, manuscript development with State Library's black&write! editors and a publication opportunity with Hachette Australia.

The black&write! Fellowships are open to all writers (published and unpublished) of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent currently living in Australia. The fellowships are open to adult fiction, young adult fiction, short story collection, poetry collection and children's book manuscripts.

black&write! is supported by the Australian Government, through the Australia Council for the Arts, publishing partner Hachette Australia, the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund, The Lionel & Yvonne Spencer Trust and The Brian J Sutton Charitable Trust.

Quotes from Minister for the Arts Leeanne Enoch:

"Congratulations to Uncle Herbert Wharton and Lay Maloney who together represent both ends of the writing spectrum.

"It's exciting to see newcomer Lay Maloney embark on a professional writing career with their debut work.

Media enquiries

State Library of Queensland Communications team
media@slq.qld.gov.au | 3840 7897

Interviews and images are available upon request.

“Meanwhile, Queensland Great recipient Herb Wharton has already created a significant body of work that has resonated deeply with national and international audiences. His new manuscript promises another chapter for this gifted writer and poet.

“Both of these 2022 Fellows are on track to produce outstanding publications that will elevate First Nations arts and share our stories.

Quotes from State Librarian and CEO Vicki McDonald AM:

“Now in its eleventh year, black&write! continues to provide much-needed pathways to publication for First Nations writers and illustrators.”

“It’s helped 23 participants launch or progress their careers, with many receiving distinguished literary recognition.”

“Past Fellows include Claire G. Coleman, Ali Cobby-Eckermann, Sue McPherson, Jared Thomas and Alison Whittaker.”

Quotes from 2022 black&write! Fellow, Herbert Wharton:

“I see winning this Fellowship as acknowledgement and acceptance of Aboriginal ways of looking at history that have been for thousands of years before books were written.”

“Birds are so important because they tell stories about things like law and order and, marriage. Animals and birds tells stories just like a book does. You learn from them like going to school or university.”

Quotes from 2022 black&write! Fellow, Lay Maloney:

“This gonna mean so much to me, my Mob, my community, my friends and my family not just currently but in one, two generations. Those stories that have been ignored, shushed and hidden away are emerging again.”

“During the 2021 Naarm lockdown I was reflecting a lot on my childhood. My friends, my family, my dad, my place, my search for identity and belonging, and all the tears and laughter that had come and gone.”

“The characters became my children. While I wrote they were real people with personalities and struggles. The story was all I thought about for months.”

* Lay Maloney’s pronouns are they/them

More information: slq.qld.gov.au/get-involved/fellowships-awards-residencies/blackwrite

Media kit: <https://spaces.hightail.com/space/Eh8A0boj8l>