Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE1168

Mafi-Williams, Lorraine

(1940 - 2001)

Born	19400808, Purfleet New South Wales Australia
Died	20010123, Byron Bay New South Wales Australia
Occupation	Actor, Filmmaker, Writer

Summary

Lorraine Mafi-Williams was an extraordinarily talented woman who ran once for parliament, as an Independent in the 1995 New South Wales Legislative Assembly elections for Ballina. She spent her lifetime in creative and caring activities.

Details

Parliamentary and Local Government Career

Candidate, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, Ballina, 1995
Party: Independent

Lorraine Mafi-Williams was born in 1940 at Purfleet, New South Wales. She was forcibly removed from her parents when young, and did not meet them again until she was 15 years old. By this time she had finished school and had been working in domestic roles for several years.

In 1967 she moved to Sydney and became involved with the Aboriginal Family Education Centre. She spent three years as a health worker. During the 1970s and 1980s Mafi-Williams became part of a powerful activist group in Sydney. With her cousin Mum Shirl and her niece Isabel Coe, she was instrumental in helping care for over 4,000 children of many ethnic backgrounds.

As well as being politically active, Mafi-Williams was culturally and creatively active. She became involved with the Aboriginal Black Theatre Art and Culture Centre in Redfern and helped found the Black Theatre in Newtown. She took courses in film-making, worked as a film production assistant, and acted in a series of films and plays, including *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*, *Women of the Sun*, *The Timeless Land* and *Pig in a Poke*. In 1988 she secured funding of $29,000 from the Australian Film Commission and the Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council to make her own film, *Eelemarni*, based on the life of a warrior of her Gidabal (Bundjalung) people.

Lorraine Mafi-Williams was also a writer and storyteller. She wrote children’s stories based on traditional Aboriginal stories, short stories and poems. She edited *Spirit Song*, an anthology of Aboriginal poetry, published in 1993.

She ran as an independent candidate for the state seat of Ballina in 1995. She wanted to establish a cultural sanctuary at Leavers Lake, near Suffolk Park on the north coast of New South Wales, and this brought her into conflict with others in the area.

In the late 1990s, her health deteriorated and she was diagnosed with diabetes. She died in February 2001.

Published resources

Edited Book
The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia : Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, society and culture, Horton, David, 1994

Book
Women of the sun, Maris, Hyllus and Sonia Borg, 1985

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Site Exhibition
Putting Skirts on the Sacred Benches: Women Candidates for the New South Wales Parliament, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2006,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/pssb/home.html

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