

Tahibachula – White Fox

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Coming to Australia at a young age and growing up as a young Native American girl in a foreign land wasn't always easy, I often found myself wondering how much Australians knew about Americas indigenous people not just their own. As I investigated this and learnt from a young age that they didn't know or understand much aside from what the media showed, I wanted to draw people's attention away from the medias ways of representing my people and give others an insight into how real our culture is and its personal significance to me. I wanted to choose something that I've always held close to me, I contemplated my options and decided that I would paint my native American grandfather, as he held a great significance to me and my family and our culture. My grandfather and I had a very strong and unique connection even from such a young age, I held a great significance to him as I am the only grandchild in my family, we held each other close. I wanted to create something that could almost tell a story within itself. Tahibachula, it means White fox in Choctaw Indian, which was the tribe that my grandfather came from. I decided to give my painting this name to dedicate it to my PaPa as much as possible. My father lost his dad much sooner than he should have, I was not only choosing to paint my grandpa as a way of telling a story but also to honour my grandpa and my fathers' legacy and to show the beauty of my family.

In my vision I didn't want to make another boring painting people would see and just say "oh I have seen that before". I wanted mine to be unique, tell its own story and teach Australians about an unfamiliar culture. The headpiece in the painting represents the strength and ferocity of my family's culture, the colour of the large beads painted into his headpiece are my dad's favourite colours.

I believe that within every piece of art created, you paint a part of yourself. You have a connection to your works and in some way, they are a reflection of you. My painting not only shows a part of who I am but it shows a connection to millions of other native American people. While researching topics for my painting, I came across a handful of native American artists who were also painting portraits of other Indians and portraying tribal traditions within our culture. Each piece held its own meaning and shows a beautiful story of the history of native Indians. This gave me the inspiration to include the headdress with specific colours and patterns.

In native American culture, a headdress is worn only during a traditional native wedding ceremony or other ceremonies such as a pow wow. A pow wow is a gathering with dances held by many native American and first nation communities. Today pow wows are seen as an opportunity for indigenous people to socialize, sing, dance and to honour their cultures. There are many different types of headdresses that all have different styles and meanings but they all have one similarity among them all which is that they all need to be earned to be worn.

I purposefully included every intricate detail with a meaning, to connect my family together, in hopes that it will tell a story to those who see it.