

From Isa boy to doctor

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Role model: Dr Marjad Page is an example of what can be achieved through determination, education, support and a bit of luck.

Often the Indigenous community makes the news for all the wrong reasons. Alcohol abuse and homelessness seem rife and health conditions and life expectancy in Aboriginal communities are shocking.

With the focus always on the negative it can be easy to forget the potential that this community has to achieve greatness.

Dr Marjad Page is an example of what can be achieved through determination, education, support and a bit of luck.

Dr Page is a Mount Isa born and raised and a proud descendent of the Ganggalidda, Wanyi and Kalkadoon tribes. Although he has travelled Australia and the world, he has deep family roots in North West Queensland. His family and friends in Mount Isa help to keep him "grounded".

Dr Page left Mount Isa as a teenager, travelling first to Townsville and then on to Brisbane. He won scholarships to study on the coast based on his talent as a basketball player.

His grandmother, Frances Page, remembers a boy who was always determined to be the best.

"He wasn't the biggest boy but he had to be better than the others...it didn't matter if it was basketball or whatever he did," she said. His determination spread over to other aspects of his life. Mrs Page remembers calling him over for a talk but he insisted instead on reading his book. "He said 'no nana I can't talk - I've got to read this book for two hours'".

Dr Page's solid work ethic paid off with him attaining a bachelor degree in Sports Science from Central Queensland University in Rockhampton and then continuing on to study medicine at James Cook University in Townsville where he is currently enrolled in the Rural Generalist Pathway.

In 2006, Dr Page took a gap year from university to broaden his horizons, first travelling to Japan, and then to deepen his connection with his community, returning to spend three months working on Mornington Island. Despite his time away from the region, Dr Page maintained close links with his family and culture and insists that he would not have been able to succeed without the support of his friends and family. It appeared that the appreciation was mutual.

His grandmother, Frances Page, and grandfather, Ron Page almost burst with pride when talking about their grandson.

"He's very smart...he shows the elders respect...although he doesn't speak the language he knows our culture and teaches others about it," Mr Page said.

It seems that Dr Page is also able to draw a crowd with people travelling from Mornington Island, Normanton and Doomadgee to Cloncurry for his unofficial graduation ceremony on Saturday.

"You should have seen them, there was everyone there from the little ones to the elders," Mr Page said.

Despite his achievements his grandfather describes him as 'a deeply humble person'.

Dr Page is currently in Mount Isa completing his two month placement in the Emergency Department at the Mount Isa Hospital. Following his formal graduation in December and further training as a rural generalist Dr Page hoped to return to the community and was looking to specialise in mental health or podiatry. "I always wanted to be a doctor but never thought I could get there," he said. "I couldn't have done it without the support of the community...and a little bit of passion and determination.

"I would like to thank KASH, Mob FM, Gidgee Healing, Nawamba House, Mount Isa Community Health, Mornington Island health workers and the Doomadgee, Cloncurry and Mount Isa communities for their support."