

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES TO SHARE A YARN WITH ELITE ATHLETES

27 May 2020

Olympic race-walker Beki Smith and Western Sydney Wanderers goalkeeper Jada Whyman are amongst 13 current and former elite athletes who have joined together to [‘Share a Yarn’](#) with remote Indigenous communities across the country.

The Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) community engagement initiative will connect elite athletes with Indigenous communities to learn about country, traditional owners of the land and history and culture, to assist athletes to enrich their position to be better role models for the Australian community.

This week Share a Yarn ambassadors will be taking part in National Reconciliation Week #NRW2020 (27 May – 3 June 2020) activities with the Indigenous youth of Arlparra, a remote community 200km from Alice Springs NT.

With physical visits to communities on hold as a result of COVID19 restrictions, athletes will be utilising the Share a Yarn online video platform to ask questions of youth in Arlparra through the engagement programs offered by Wanta Aboriginal Corporation, seeking to learn about aspects of culture, land, history and peoples and how they can contribute to achieving reconciliation in Australia.

AIS Director of Athlete Wellbeing and Engagement Matti Clements said the new initiative, and National Reconciliation Week, was an opportunity to help athletes gain a better understanding of different Indigenous cultures within Australia.

“We want to help athletes gain the knowledge they need to empower them to role model cultural understanding and inclusivity and help to prevent racial divisions in sport,” said Clements.

“The theme for this year’s National Reconciliation Week is ‘in this together’ and I don’t think anyone realised how this would resonate throughout the community given the current circumstances we are all facing.

“When restrictions lift, athletes involved in this program will be given the opportunity to immerse themselves in the culture of an Indigenous community by spending time in communities learning from the locals in the area and creating ongoing, real relationships through an online video platform.”

The athlete ambassadors selected for Share a Yarn are a mix of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) athletes and non-ATSI athletes and will be involved for a 12 month period, which includes community visits, remaining in contact and supporting communities through online video messaging, community event appearances and sharing their learning back to their sport.

Olympian Beki Smith says she has been proud to be a part of the initiative from the very beginning. “As a proud Indigenous Woman I am excited to see the AIS develop the Share a Yarn initiative, and prioritise the importance of learning and engaging with the different Indigenous cultures within Australia.” Smith said,

“I look forward to going on this learning journey and supporting my fellow athlete ambassadors.”

The AIS will partner with organisations that are already delivering programs to youth in these communities, to open up channels for ongoing communication and learning between participants and athletes.

Commonwealth Games Gold Medallist and Tokyo-bound race walker, Jemima Montag, was one of the first athletes to put her hand up to be involved in the program.

“It is a privilege to be a part of the Share a Yarn initiative and continue to develop strong connections to Indigenous Australians” said Montag.

“I hope to share my experiences from this initiative within my sport and greater sphere of influence to encourage others to engage with and learn from Australian Indigenous communities.”

For more information and full athlete ambassador biographies – please visit ais.gov.au/share-a-yarn

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Share a Yarn Ambassadors

Amanda Reid –Cycling Australia

Beki Smith –Athletics Australia

Brooke Peris – Hockey Australia

Christopher McHugh – Volleyball Australia

Emma Fessey – Rowing Australia

Jada Whyman – Football Federation Australia

Jemima Montag – Athletics Australia

Katie Kelly – Triathlon Australia

Laura Hodges – Basketball Australia (former)

Michelle Wilson – Australian Karate Federation

Mitch Bullen – Cycling Australia (former)

Rowena Meredith – Rowing Australia

Rebecca Hancock – Australian Sailing

