

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE1066

Watson, Maureen

(1931 - 2009)

Nationality Australian

Born 9 November, 1931, Rockhampton Queensland Australia

Died 4 January, 2009

Occupation Aboriginal rights activist, Aboriginal storyteller, Actor, Singer

Summary

Maureen Watson was born in Rockhampton in 1930. Of Biri descent, spent her early life in rural Queensland, moving to Brisbane with her five sons in 1970. She became heavily involved in the struggle for indigenous right and justice throughout the 1970s and 80s, as her participation in protests at the Brisbane Commonwealth Games testified to. She developed a well deserved reputation as a storyteller, her major medium for the promotion of Aboriginal culture.

Details

Maureen Watson was born in 1931 in Rockhampton, Queensland, of Biri descent. She spent her early life in rural Queensland, left school at 13, married, and had five children.

She later returned to school and matriculated, and then moved to Brisbane with her five sons to begin an arts degree at the University of Queensland in 1970. She completed two years of her course before the pressures of raising a family forced her to quit. Over succeeding years, she emerged as a poet, singer, actor and political activist.

Moving to Sydney, she set up the Aboriginal Peoples Gallery in Redfern in 1981. She was at the forefront of the Aboriginal protests against the Commonwealth Games in Brisbane in 1982, and was arrested three times while participating in demonstrations.

Black Reflections, a collection of her stories and poems, was published in 1982, followed by Kaiyu's Waiting, a school kit of children's stories, in 1984. She was the narrator for Robert Bropho's film, Mundu Nyuringu, in 1983, and she appeared in Jack Davis' play, The Honey Spot, in its 1986 tour of Victoria and New South Wales.

Storytelling remained her major medium for promoting Aboriginal culture, and she has travelled widely in Australia, New Zealand and Europe to give storytelling presentations. Her stories told about the Aboriginal experience of urban life.

Published resources

Edited Book

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

Book

My Mob: The Story of Aboriginal Family Life, Barlow, Alex, 2001

Honourable Grandmother, Barron, Kevin, 1999

Journal Article

But Most Certainly I am Aboriginal / Maureen Watson Speaks to Bronwen Levy, Watson, Maureen and Levy, Bronwen, 1991

Black Child: I, Too, Am Human, Watson, Maureen, 1977

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Author Details

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