

FIONA HUGHES

Artist statement & biography

Fiona Hughes is a Trawoolway, Tyereelore Woman from Tasmania. Fiona is a Traditional Cultural Shell Stringer and was taught by her mother who is the sister of the late Aunty Joan Brown who was one of four shell stringers from Cape Barren Island. The shell stringers were Sarah Mansell, Gladys Maynard and Clyda Summers. The four women were instrumental in keeping our beautiful tradition ongoing today.

Fiona has always loved traditional shell stringing and has fond memories of watching Aunty Joan on Cape Barren Island cleaning and stringing her beautiful necklaces and collecting shells with her mother Marie on the beaches of Cape Barren Island as a young girl. Those years were precious but over time life changed, and as a young Aboriginal woman, I had responsibilities of family and work.

Unfortunately, I became unwell and had the opportunity to fix an old traditional rice necklace. Doing this embedded my culture within me, and the passing down of necklace making the way my ancestral women of Tasmania have done for thousands of years. I endeavour to pass this beautiful tradition on to my granddaughters, as it was passed on to me. Shell stringing is an important part of connecting to our traditional ways in Tasmania, so our precious culture will always continue.

- Fiona Hughes, February 2022