

Yvonne O'Neill

I am an Australian Indigenous artist from Goodooga in the north west of NSW. Born the youngest of five children, I am a Noonghaburra woman from Noongal Country.

During my years as Head of Indigenous Education at St Joseph's Nudgee College in Brisbane, I developed a close partnership with Australian Catholic University (ACU).

I worked collaboratively with ACU – establishing pathways for Indigenous students to access higher education, and often assisting with various community arts projects at the Brisbane Campus.

In 2010, I was commissioned by ACU to paint this acrylic on canvas, which tells the story of many Australians on a journey to Rome to witness the canonisation of Blessed Mary MacKillop – and this was the beginning of a spiritual journey for me.

I travelled to Rome for Mary MacKillop's canonisation, with students and staff from Nudgee College and Nereda White, Director of ACU's Centre of Indigenous Education and Research.

This shared journey to Rome significantly informs the work, and its story is told by the three large circles at the top of the painting.

The largest circle to the centre is Rome, with ACU top left, and St Joseph's Nudgee College the large circle to the right. The thick black lines to Rome are the journey lines of both Nudgee College and ACU.

Seven smaller circles to the bottom of the painting, all with journey lines, represent the Australian states and territories coming together in the special place of Rome to witness the canonisation of Mary MacKillop.

The process of creating this painting helped to deepen my understanding of the Catholic faith by providing a tangible opportunity for reflection.