

DRIVING SOCIAL INNOVATION IN PLACE AND COMMUNITY

2025 City North Activation Program

FUTURE MEMORIALS LAB: FIRST NATIONS

Future Memorials Lab: First Nations

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Project Summary

The *Future Memorials Lab* looked at how public art and First Nations cultural practice can contribute to truth-telling in urban spaces. Participating in the City North Activation Challenge offered a way for these ideas to be explored in inclusive spaces within RMIT's City North Social Innovation Precinct.

The City North Activation Challenge and the social innovation it encourages, presented the right opportunity to explore the vision of the Project. The vision centres on engaging the public in bold conversations around First Peoples' sovereignty and traumatic colonial histories through involvement in public art.

Numerous milestones beneficial to the community were achieved over the course of the Project and areas such as urban research, truth telling, public art and First Nations' cultural resurgence were all able to be examined.

The Project galvanised collaborations between researchers and students across the RMIT College of Design and Social Context. Its development was also assisted by numerous groups such as RMIT Library staff, RMIT Property Services Group, and the RMIT Student Union (RUSU). Other stakeholders engaged include local government public art teams from the [City of Melbourne](#) and [Merri-Bek City Council](#).

Key Project Activities, Milestones & Deliverables

The Project allowed for the establishment of a series of activities and the achievement of multiple deliverables.

Project members featured on notable public talk panels such as RMIT's Practice Research Symposium (PRS) in October, and RMIT Library's City North Activation Challenge Project's Digital Storytelling Mixer. A public project workshop was also held in November 10, 2025. This event enabled RMIT staff and external stakeholders from across Merri-bek City Council interested in areas such as public art and First Nations Peoples' cultural resurgence, to be brought together and imagine Future Memorials.





Four artworks as part of the Future Memorials program were commissioned during the Project’s run and will feature on a temporary display around the City North Precinct in March 2026. A public symposium will also accompany the release of these art pieces and will feature presentations hosted by experts from Canada and Australia.

To conclude, from February to June of 2026, a Future Memorials website will be designed and launched. This website will share reflections and recommendations from the Project with the public.

Project Impact

While the Project is still delivering all its outputs, the outcomes produced thus far suggest it has been able to effectively inspire creatives, researchers and students to consider developing their own truth-telling projects in sensitive and responsible ways. Additionally, the Project has allowed for affirmative and generative collaborations between non-Indigenous and First Nations creatives and researchers to take place.

Significant opportunities for knowledge exchange, skill sharing, building profile and fruitful partnerships have been aided by the Project, in particular for RMIT’s Yoonggama First Peoples’ researchers. The Project’s programs have also had a considerable influence on non-Indigenous stakeholders, especially around the reconsidering of colonial placemaking and monuments.

The City North Precinct acted as a living lab for the Project, enabling groups to be brought together for consideration, exploration, discussions and proposals of ideas and solutions to combat social challenges. Furthermore, the 2025 City North Activation Challenge Showcase in December served as a platform for Project findings to be communicated to the public and for interest to be generated into the activation challenge at the centre of the Project.

Future Planning

Following the March 2026 Project outcomes, discussions will continue with City of Melbourne and Merri-Bek City Council. To expand the Project, new partnerships will also be explored with organisations such as Queen Victoria Market and the Old Melbourne Gaol.

There are plans to apply for further research and arts funding to accelerate the Project and continue collaborations over the long term, including additional exchanges with artists and curators from countries such as Canada.

A major goal for 2026 revolves around activating a permanent ‘memorials’ space within the City North Precinct. The establishment of ongoing temporary commissions that focus on truth-telling and First Nations-led public artworks have been discussed. To support a continued presence on campus, explorations into philanthropic support, research and arts funding have also been explored.



...all these great artists have brilliant ideas about how to mark and commemorate some of these difficult histories, but also celebrate Indigenous cultural insurgence. Creativity and art programming in the City can actually activate important memories around truth-telling.

The *Future Memorials Lab: First Nations* team acknowledge and thank the following contributors:

Future Memorials Lab: First Nations

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For more information on the City North Social Innovation Precinct,
including partnership, collaboration and co-location opportunities, visit:

