

# Meet a coworker: Cassandra Best

Cassandra Best is a proud Kamilaroi woman from Gunnedah who has recently joined SSI's Local Area Coordinator (LAC) program as an Aboriginal Access officer.



"Yaama! My family name is Moodie. We are direct descendants from the great Aboriginal warrior, Gambu Ganuurru, or Cumbo Gunnerah, also known as the Red Chief or Red Kangaroo. He was a Kamilaroi man who lived in the town of Gunnedah and he had a reputation as a warrior and wise leader of the Gunn-e-darr tribe."



"My totem is Kaputhin, the Eagle. The Eagle conveys the powers and messages of the spirit; it is man's connection to the divine because it flies higher than any other bird. If the eagle has appeared, it bestows you with the freedom and courage to look ahead.

"The eagle is symbolic of the importance of honesty and truthful principles," Cassy explained.

Through her role with SSI, Cassy will support Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people to understand and learn how to navigate the NDIS, support the community and the NDIA to understand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and customs, and be a reference for cultural protocols within the LAC program.

Once the LAC program has more First Nations staff join the team, Cassy will also support them to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants and community.

"Part of my role is to educate staff in the LAC program on how to engage with cultural respect and understanding of the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultures and to set a standard for all interaction in the community," she said.

Cassy explained that when working with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities, it is very important that an introduction from a First Nation person is made prior to engaging with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participants or community members.

"Therefore, in the LAC program, all introductions will be made through consultation with myself as the Aboriginal Access Officer, until we employ more Aboriginal staff. This is to respect Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people's cultural protocols, cultural confidentiality, and cultural knowledge," said Cassy

"I am excited to be here at SSI and looking forward to my journey in bridging the past to the present within this organisation."

For more information you can contact Cassy Best at [cbest@ssi.org.au](mailto:cbest@ssi.org.au)