

MY NAME

## The Quiet Achiever - Michael Leslie page 8

### ARTS

**MICHAEL LESLIE HAS TURNED HIS OWN SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE INTO OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS TO GIVE THEM THE CONFIDENCE TO TACKLE WHATEVER LIFE THROWS THEIR WAY.**

Michael Leslie had been a quiet achiever in Indigenous arts for 35 years until he received the premier Red Ochre Award and \$50,000 for his lifetime's contribution last month. At a glitzy ceremony at the Sydney Opera House, Michael was presented with the award by Olympic swimmer and Indigenous advocate Ian Thorpe.

Dr Mark Bin Bakar, Chair of the Australia Council's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board, said that Michael

received the Red Ochre, Australia's most prestigious peer-assessed award for Indigenous arts, in recognition of a career that has seen him excel in dance, choreography, acting and directing, both in Australia and the United States.

Michael said he hopes more young Indigenous Australians will experience the transformative power of the arts.

"The arts can empower and help people harness their own destiny," he said. "Performing arts is an area in which Aboriginal people can, will and are making an important cultural and social contribution to Australia."

Growing up in Moree, Michael was only a kid when he saw a shampoo advertisement on the television and decided to become a dancer. Later, after hearing about dance classes at the Black Theatre he went to Redfern, which is where he met his mentor Carole Johnson. She later recommended

him for a Churchill Fellowship to attend the Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre School in New York where he lived and trained for seven years.

"Carole said I had the potential to be one of the world's best dancers. Being sent to New York was mind-blowing, it gave me huge self-esteem and confidence," says Michael.

It's an opportunity he is very grateful for and he says he has never looked back.

After he returned to Australia, Michael made the decision to join the Australian Dance Theatre. He then decided he needed to tell stories related to his Aboriginality. In 1989, after being approached by writer Jimmy Chi, he choreographed the very first musical production of *Bran Nue Dae* and the second production in 1993, in which he also performed.

Michael had a hand in the set-up of Western Australia's Black Swan State Theatre

## The Quiet Achiever

**Michael Leslie, this year's recipient of the prestigious Red Ochre Award, says the performing arts can change your life.**



**Being sent to New York was mind-blowing, it gave me huge self-esteem and confidence**

Company and initiated the Aboriginal Theatre training course at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) in 1996. Today his students are household names – artists such as Leah Purcell, Trevor Jamieson and Ursula Yovich. When the Queensland Government established the Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts in Brisbane, it was Michael Leslie they sought to establish its courses.

With a wealth of experience in the performing arts, Michael now works for Rio Tinto in Dampier, WA, implementing the Michael Leslie Pilbara Performing Arts Program, and he recently formed the Michael Leslie Foundation for the Performing Arts nationally, which was a personal dream come true.

"I'm motivated by the injustices to our people. I never drink alcohol. We've got to care to make a difference. I practise what I preach. I've seen kids go on to pursue what they love. It's about finding a tool that addresses the needs of our children and us, as a race of people," says Michael.



Artistic director, dancer and teacher Michael Leslie was recently honoured with the Australia Council for the Arts' \$50 000 Red Ochre Award. He received the award in recognition of his long career, where he has excelled in dance, choreography, acting and directing in Australia and America.

He recently formed the Michael Leslie Foundation for the Performing Arts, a national program. Through this program, he hopes to teach and inspire children and young people to gain self-respect and pride through the Arts, and help them overcome self-defeating attitudes and barriers that prevent them from reaching their true potential.

## ACTIVITY 1: READING

What does it mean to describe Michael Leslie as a "quiet achiever"?

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Michael received his award at a "glitzy ceremony" at the Sydney Opera House.

Which of these best describe what "glitzy ceremony" means in this context?

- ☐ a quiet ceremony
- ☐ a ceremony that attracted a lot of attention
- ☐ a ceremony with lots of bright lights
- ☐ a ceremony full of show-offs

What gave Michael greater confidence to pursue his early dance career?

- ☐ winning the Red Ochre Award
- ☐ winning a Churchill fellowship to attend the Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre in New York
- ☐ meeting Ian Thorpe
- ☐ choreographing the first *Bran Nue Dae* musical





What motivated Michael to set up his foundation?

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## ACTIVITY 2: LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS - SPELLING

The spelling mistakes in these sentences have been underlined.  
Write the correct spelling for each underlined word in the box.

Michael turned his experiences into opportunitys.

Dancing gave him a lot of confidance.

He recieved a special award.

Michael desided to become a dancer.

Michael was recomended for a scholarship.

He always had great potenshal.



Each sentence has one word that is incorrect.

Write the correct spelling of the word in the box.

Michael is a quite achiever.

The arts can help young peeple excel.

He traned hard at the academy.

Many of his students love their coarses.

It was a personnel dream of his.

It is important to make a differance.



## ACTIVITY 3: LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS

Which is correct beginning for this sentence?

\_\_\_\_\_ Michael is successful now, it hasn't always been easy.

- ☐ Since
- ☐ Despite
- ☐ Although
- ☐ In spite of

Which word is missing from the second sentence?

It was sometimes tough going. \_\_\_\_\_, Michael didn't give up.

- ☐ While
- ☐ Whereas
- ☐ However
- ☐ Although

Which sentence correctly uses speech marks?

- ☐ "It's about finding a tool that addresses the needs of our children," says Michael.
- ☐ It's about finding a tool that addresses the needs of our children,"says Michael."
- ☐ "It's about finding a tool that addresses the needs" of our children, says Michael.
- ☐ "It's about finding a tool that addresses the needs of our children, says Michael."

Which pair of words correctly completes the sentence?

While \_\_\_\_\_ been tough at times, \_\_\_\_\_ been worth it.

- ☐ its                      its
- ☐ it's                      it's
- ☐ its                      it's
- ☐ it's                      its



Which word correctly completes the sentence?

It is requested that all phones \_\_\_\_\_ turned off during the ceremony.

- ☐ be
- ☐ being
- ☐ are being
- ☐ have been

Underline the pronouns in this sentence.

"I'm motivated by the in justices to our people. I never drink alcohol. We've got to care to make a difference. I've seen kids go on to pursue what they love."

Which word or words correctly complete this sentence?

I will be happy about my effort \_\_\_\_\_ I win or not.

- ☐ even if
- ☐ whether
- ☐ whenever
- ☐ regardless





## ACTIVITY 4: WRITING A DISCUSSION

A discussion is a type of ARGUMENT text that argues two or more points of view about an issue.

Discussions begin by stating the Issue, and then give different Sides to the debate, concluding with a Resolution, judging which side is more valid.

argument type	social purpose	Stages	phases
discussion	debates two or more points of view	Issue Sides Resolution	evidence statistics quotes examples elaborations conclusions

**Every child should be involved in the performing arts, like dancing, acting and singing.**

What do you think about his idea? Write to convince a reader of your opinions by discussing both sides of the issue.

Think about:

- ★ if you agree or disagree with the issue
- ★ arguments for and against the issue
- ★ an introduction - a way to introduce your ideas by clearly stating both sides of the issue
- ★ reasons and evidence that explain your ideas for both sides of the argument
- ★ a conclusion - decide whether or not you agree with the issue

Remember to:

- ★ plan your Discussion before you start
- ★ write in sentences
- ★ pay attention to your spelling and punctuation
- ★ choose your words carefully to convince a reader of your opinions
- ★ use a new paragraph for each new idea
- ★ check and edit your writing so that it is clear for a reader.