

A fashion show featuring models in traditional Indigenous Australian clothing. The central model wears a white t-shirt and a long, flowing skirt with a complex, repeating pattern in shades of orange and white. To the left, another model wears a vibrant, multi-colored patterned garment. To the right, a model's arm is visible in a green mesh sleeve and a yellow patterned sleeve. In the background, an audience is seated and watching the show.

**A FUSION OF FIRST NATIONS  
FASHION, ART, AND STYLE ON  
LARRAKIA COUNTRY**

▼ Image details

Source: Addressing Indigeneity

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The intertwining of First Nations fashion, art, and style shone out in the array of celebrations, events, and outfits during Darwin's festival of Blak Culture in August. The popularity of First Nations fashion saw the striking designs featured on the runway, displayed in galleries and museums, and worn by visitors.

The Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair Foundation's (DAAFF) medley of programs offered visitors the chance to see First Nations fashion shows and participate in art opportunities. Their Art Fair presented and retailed textiles, prints, sculptural pieces, paintings, and outfits off the rack from 70-plus First Nations-owned Art Centres.



At the close of the first show, 'Our Legacy'. Image from authors.

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Some of the fashions from Ittja Ntjarra. Image from authors.

At their Country to Couture runway shows, First Nations artists, designers, and non-Indigenous labels paraded 22 collections in the two shows, 'Our Legacy' and 'Our Heart'. The following day, their National Indigenous Fashion Awards celebrated 66 First Nations fashion designers, artists, and collectives through the six categories of traditional adornment, textile design, wearable art, fashion design, community collaboration, and business achievement.

The Darwin Festival's panels and exhibitions explored textile practices and fashion in art. The exhibition *Blak Power: 50 Years of First Nations Superheroes in Australian Art* showcased creative versions of First Nations superhero fashion. Whether on film, canvas, in photos, or sculpture, artists have created unique outfits on their superheroes and visually yarned the superhero's place to them or their communities.



*Dylan Mooney's Blak Superheroes Series, 2021. Image from authors.*



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*Dress displayed at the exhibition Manburra: our story of printed cloth from Bábbarra Women's Centre. Image from authors.*

In a stand-alone exhibition at Charles Darwin University, Maningrida artists from Bábbarra Women's Centre presented works of hand-printed textiles, paper prints, and fibre art. One lone mannequin in a Bábbarra designed dress was prominent in the gallery.

Even the outfits worn at these many events celebrated First Nations designers and artists. Embraced by people of all ages and body types, the vibrant clothes from older and newer collections honoured and nurtured the growing industry.

At the National Indigenous Fashion Awards, the winner of the Fashion Design prize, Wiradjuri, Gangulu and Yorta Yorta woman Lillardia Briggs-Houston wore her exquisite creation. Resembling a silver screen star, Briggs-Houston's black slinky gown featured an intricate cultural design, and her headdress, necklace and bracelets were fashioned from shells and stones.





*Lillardia Briggs-Houston after her win. Image from authors.*



*Model Roman Mununggurr wearing the Nagula Jarndu shirt, shorts, and cross bag set. Image from authors.*

Menswear in the diverse collections was particularly strong this year and spotted on several people was a standout shirt from Nagula Jarndu. The shirt's rich hot pink and purple colours tell the story of Balu Burugun (Plants From Country).

The fantastic range of events on Larrakia Country in August truly highlighted First Nations fashion's role as wearable art. The interconnection of First Nations fashion, art, and style means that the same piece is seen on the runway, in a gallery or worn by a person.

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