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**Artist:** Wayne Connolly

**Date of Birth:** 5/07/1976

**Language/s:**



### **Biography:**

I started working at the Yarrabah Arts & Cultural Centre in the late 1990s. I helped to construct the boardwalk near rain forest at the back of the museum. I started painting canvas and making ceramics this year, 2019.

My father's mother Bessie Yeatman married Stanley Connolly. She was Kuku Yalanji and Kuku Taipan. They were from Wujul Wujal and Maryvale.

My father's father was from Kowanyama to Ngukurr (Roper River) and his name was Claude Ponto. He was a legendary tracker. The police took him from the bank of Mitchell River, near Kowanyama where he lived to go down to Victoria to track the notorious Bushranger Ned Kelly. One of the Bush Rangers shot him in the knee. He then retired and ended up in Yarrabah. He started making carved and polished trophy shells. One of his shields is in the National Museum of Australia's collection. He met my grandmother in Mossman. They were both working for the local police. My grandmother was from near *Kalkadoon* and was forcibly taken and was part of the stolen generation.

My mother, Valmai Connolly (Donavan-Marshall father's side) (Mitchell- Hicks Mother's side) is from the Gumbaynggirr language group from NSW. Her tribe ran from Nambucca all the way south to Wallaga Lake Aboriginal Mission to escape from being stolen and slaughtered. My parents meet at college in Sydney. My mum was studying nursing. They finally ended up in Yarrabah where they had five kids.

My father Wayne Connolly Snr was a priest under the Saint Albans Anglican Church. We moved a lot in my younger days. We lived in *Oenpelli* (NT), Palm Island (QLD), Cherbourg (QLD) and then Kowanyama. I finished high school in Yarrabah where I now live.

I have family in lots of places and enjoy travelling to visit them.

I've been interested in art for a long time and thought I would give it a go. I do a lot of camping and hunting on land and sea and love traditional food. At the moment my art is looking at life experiences of being in nature. I like painting animals, fish and nature. I love listening to the old peoples' stories.

### **Group Exhibitions**

**2020, April**

**Endeavour Voyage: The Untold Stories of Cook and the First Australians** National Museum of Australia, Canberra ACT