Weipa electrical tradeswoman named NAIDOC Apprentice of the Year

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A Rio Tinto Weipa electrician named ‘Apprentice of the Year’ at the 2017 National NAIDOC Awards hopes to inspire other women to consider a career in mining.

Sharee Yamashita was announced winner of her category at the prestigious awards ceremony in Cairns on Saturday night.

She successfully completed an electrical apprenticeship with Rio Tinto’s Weipa operations and graduated from her studies in February 2017. She recently secured a full-time role as an electrician at the same site.

Sharee was acknowledged for her strong work ethic and is known amongst her peers as a dedicated employee who is skilled in all aspects of her trade.

“I’m humbled to have won this award. I’m so fortunate to have had strong workplace and family mentors who have supported me along the way.

“Rio Tinto has opened so many doors for me and I hope my win inspires other women, particularly those from Indigenous backgrounds, to consider a career in the mining industry,” said Sharee.

Rio Tinto general manager, Weipa operations, Daniel van der Westhuizen said “Congratulations to Sharee, we couldn’t be more delighted by her achievement.

“From the beginning Sharee’s determination to succeed has been commendable. She has a very bright future ahead of her.

“At Rio Tinto Weipa operations we are proud of the work we do through our Indigenous employment and development programmes. Supporting the advancement of Local Aboriginal people is key to positioning the Western Cape for a long-term sustainable future,” he said.

The NAIDOC Awards are an opportunity to recognise and celebrate outstanding contributions Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians make to improve the lives of Indigenous people. The event is also an opportunity to promote issues to the wider community.

The ceremony coincides with NAIDOC Week – celebrating the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

About Sharee Yamashita

Sharee was born on Thursday Island and attended boarding school in Townsville where she developed her strengths in maths, legal studies and physics.

She began a business and accounting degree but deferred her studies to move to Weipa. A cousin working as an apprentice diesel fitter encouraged Sharee to apply for an electrical apprenticeship at Rio Tinto’s Weipa operations – where she could put her strong background in maths and science to work. Sharee hopes to inspire other young women to look for career opportunities in non-traditional roles.
Pictured: NAIDOC ‘Apprentice of the Year’ Sharee Yamashita
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