



LIAM MENDES

Williams Humes, in his cadet uniform at Sydney's Knox Grammar, wants to follow his great-grandfather's path into the army

## Proud to follow army pioneer's footsteps

RHIANNON DOWN

William Humes, 16, is proud to walk in the footsteps of his trail-blazing great-grandfather, Captain Reginald "Reg" Saunders, the first Aboriginal Australian officer in the Australian Army.

William, in year 10 at Knox Grammar on Sydney's north shore through the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation, has joined the cadets and plans to join the army and train as an engineer when he leaves school.

Saunders served in North Africa,

Greece and Papua New Guinea during WWII, including in the fierce battle to expel German forces from Crete, and later in the Korean War.

William has grown up hearing stories of his "larrikin" great-grandfather's heroics, including how he spent a month sheltering under a house in Crete after his regiment was left behind during the evacuation. "Growing up I heard all about him and we've always visited places named after him and all the people he met, and their descendants.

"Coming to Knox and joining



the cadet unit has given me a bit of experience and it has made me look up to him so much more."

As the nation pauses to mark Remembrance Day, Saunders is honoured as a pioneer who fought for his country in a time when indigenous people experienced widespread discrimination and racism.

"My grandmother always talks about how he was a larrikin in his platoon and his battalion," William said. "He was the joke master and a pretty funny bloke."

His family stayed in touch with descendants of those who sheltered Saunders in Crete and the two families met for a reunion when William was a young boy.

As well as his growing passion for military life after cadets gave him a taste of the "drill and dress and rank system", the proud descendant of the Gunditjmarra, Nyooongar and Jawoyn people discovered his love of engineering

through cultural fishing practices.

"I've always liked the idea of having an answer and I've always liked building things," he said.

"I've always looked at Lake Condah (in western Victoria), where my grandmother's side comes from, there are lots of traps and fish nets and cool designs."

Lake Condah became his great-grandfather's final resting place after his ashes were scattered in the lake that rings the Lake Condah Mission.

A gallery at the Australian War Memorial has also been named in his honour.