



# **Power of Bones: One Woman's Inspiring Journey from Abuse and Racism to Cultural Leader**

*Keelen Mailman*

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It looked bleak and predictable for little Keelen Mailman, who was forced to live with an alcoholic mother, absent father, the horrors of regular sexual and physical assault, and the casual racism of a small outback town in the 1960s. But somehow, despite the pain and deprivation, as well as a lost education, she managed to absorb her mother's lessons: her Bidjara language and culture, her obligations to her country, and her ability to stand up for herself. So, it was no surprise to some that a girl who could hide for a year in her own home to keep her family together, run as fast as Raylene Boyle, and catch porcupine and goanna, would one day make history. At just 30, and as a single mother, Keelen became the first Indigenous woman to run a commercial cattle station when she took over Mt. Tabor, which is located two hours from Augathella on the black soil plains of western Queensland. This is the heartland of Bidjara country, after all—the place her mother, grandparents, and great-grandparents had camped on and cared for, and where their ancestors left their marks on caves and rock walls more than 10,000 years ago. In this unflinching memoir, Keelen's warmth, determination, and irresistible humor shine through as she recalls her extraordinary life.

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