

Biography

Neville Bonner

By Jack Pearce

Orientation

Neville Thomas Bonner was born on the 28th of March 1922 and on the 5th of February 1999 he died. Neville Bonner was born on Ukerebagh island on the Tweed river New South Wales. Neville was not recognised like everyone because he was an Aboriginal. Neville Bonner is a famous person because he was the first Aboriginal Australian to sit in parliament.

Early life

When Neville was young he moved to Queensland from New South Wales to live on a farm with his mother. He worked on the farm and was not very well educated. Like most Indigenous children at the time, Bonner received little formal education. In 1946 he moved to Palm Island near Townsville Queensland and he became assistant settlement overseer.

Education

Like many Aboriginal children of his age he had little formal schooling, leaving after he had attained the third grade at the age of fifteen. He worked as a rural labourer on properties across Queensland until 1946, when he commenced employment at the Palm Island Aboriginal settlement. He rose to the position of assistant settlement overseer on Palm Island.

Family

After meeting his first wife Mona on a cattle station in north Queensland, the couple returned to her home on Palm Island where they married in 1943. Living with his family on the Aboriginal Reserve for the next seventeen years, Bonner became actively involved in community affairs. It was during this time that Bonner learned many of the skills he would later call on as a politician. Neville was the second son of Henry Kenneth Bonner, an English migrant, and his wife Mona, the daughter of Ida, nee Sandy and Roger Bell. In 1983 he spoke of his family background on his mother's side. Before Neville Bonner was born his father Henry Kenneth Bonner went back to England to live with his family. Neville Bonner never got to meet his father.

Adulthood

Neville Bonner worked in the liberal party for Aboriginal Australian rights. within 5 years Neville was elected member of the Australian Federal Parliament. Neville Bonner was the first ever aboriginal to sit in parliament. when Neville Bonner joined parliament he was almost forced out by people that did not want Aboriginal people in parliament.

Conclusion

After resigning in 1983 bonner worked with a number of organisations to improve the welfare of the First Nations people. He was appointed an officer of the order of Australians in 1984. Neville Bonner was awarded Australian of the year award and was also the first ever Aboriginal person to work in parliament. Neville Bonner died on the 5th of February 1999. 5th