

## 42kms to sanity

For some people, it's a holiday, a good book, a massage or simply just time out to enjoy some solitude.

But not for IMP's triple-marathon Graduate, Bianca Graham, about to line up in her fourth marathon in Boston on Monday.

"It keeps my well-being in check. Who would have thought that running 42kms keeps me sane – I blame IMP for that," she laughed.

Bianca was born and raised in the Cape York community of Weipa, where, like many Indigenous communities, everyday essentials are hard to come by.

Instead, locals rely on a once a week barge service from Cairns, 800kms away, to deliver groceries.

In 2011, that barge delivered Deek and an opportunity Bianca couldn't resist; IMP.

"I developed a love of running during my boarding school years in Townsville, and when I heard about IMP, I embraced the opportunity to be an example for my community and show them the benefits of living an active and healthy lifestyle," she said.

Bianca, who now lives and works in Melbourne, and fellow 2011 IMP Graduate, Nadine Hunt, became the first Indigenous Australian woman to finish the New York Marathon as part of IMP.

"That event really set the foundation for me and Nads. Since then, I seem to get roped in by her to enter more races.

"We have run New York (2011), Frankfurt (2013), Tokyo (2015) and now about to take on Boston Marathon. My little sister Nadine hits me up and I say yes," Bianca laughed.

Although heavily encouraged by her fellow IMP Graduate, Bianca's more serious motivation is anchored deeper than her IMP Family.

"First and foremost, my family and Cape York communities motivate me to be a positive role model. Marathons are tough, really tough.

"When I'm in the incredibly difficult stages of the marathon, when I hit the wall and need to dig deep to remember my purpose, my "why", it's easy; I look at the words written on my hands which say 'family and community'. They get me through.

"I call on the old people to give me the strength to get through," she said.

The 2016 Boston Marathon holds a special significance for Bianca and her fellow IMP Graduates, Nadine Hunt (2011) and Luke McKenzie (2013), being the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Deek's record run, breaking the tape in a blistering time of 2:07:51.

Deek will be there to support the Graduates, and lace up his joggers for a world-record attempt in the 5km event. Well, not quite, but never dismiss a champion!

"This event means a lot because I want to showcase to the world what Rob has achieved since winning that marathon.

“We can explain to people about Rob’s great work and the foundation he has created, but there is greater impact through action.

“Plus there seems something special to run in his footsteps thirty years later; just not in the footstep speed that he did all that time ago!”

Although running keeps her sane, Bianca still acknowledges the incredible mental struggle synonymous with running marathons.

“The hardest part is it does hurt, but mainly from the negative thoughts in your mind.

“Overcoming the mental barriers and negativity is a struggle, but you overcome them and you are always a stronger person for it,” she said.

After enduring four marathons, Bianca is undoubtedly a pillar of strength and resilience, creating a fabric of inspiration for her family and community.

The family and community that have been her purpose from the beginning; her reason for running 42kms to sanity.