

ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER

news

FROM THE NATIONAL
MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA



Get ready for
Didj Comp
2006



Goolarri: 'On Air'



First Nations
from Canada

NATIONAL
MUSEUM OF
AUSTRALIA
CANBERRA

2	Message from the Director of the National Museum of Australia
3	Message from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Program Director
3	Message from the Principal Advisor (Indigenous) and Senior Curator
3	Program highlights in brief
4	Mates
5	Goolarri 'On Air'
6	Dari a Krar
7	People of the Cedar
8	How Blakfellas tell history
9	Indigenous history
10	NAIDOC Week program for 2006
11	Collaborating for rights
12	ATSIP News
14	Collection stories
15	Important acquisitions

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander News

General Editor: Margo Neale

Edition Editor: Barbara Paulson

Copy Editors: Judy Barker and Jeanie Watson

Design: Liquid Creative Projects

Print: Pirie Printers

Cover photos

Main: Ken Thaiday Snr 2005, photo: Dragi Markovic

Bottom left: Norman Shillingsworth 2005,

photo: Lannon Harley

Bottom middle: 'Edo' Hines 2005, photo: Jeremy Lucas

Bottom right: Dempsey Bob and William White 2006,

photo: George Serras

Gallery of First Australians photos (right)

Left: Tasmanian Community display, photo: George Serras

Middle left: Tooloyn Koortakay display, photo: George Serras

Middle right: *Forget Me Nots* 1997 installation by Julie Freeman, photo: George Serras

Right: Pukamani Poles display, photo: George Serras

Email: image@nma.gov.au

Produced with assistance from the Photography, Publishing and Copyright and Reproduction sections of the National Museum of Australia

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA



Photos: George Serras

Welcome. I am pleased to announce that I have made some structural changes which I believe will enhance the Indigenous programs across the Museum and our profile in this area.

I have appointed Margo Neale to a new position as my Principal Advisor on Indigenous Matters to focus on the wider Indigenous picture, nationally and internationally. In her new role Margo will be able to engage more actively in significant Indigenous community projects, festivals and events and to work more directly with the academic community, as required by her new status as Adjunct Professor at the Australian National University.

Equally important I have combined the ATSIP and Repatriation units under the direction of Mike Pickering. Mike brings great expertise, experience and commitment to the area and with new staff in place I look forward to exciting developments.

In October 2005 I participated in the official launch of the publication *Wrapped in a Possum Skin Cloak: The Tooloyn Koortakay Collection in the National Museum of Australia* and the *Gunya Winyarr* exhibition, at the Koorie Heritage Trust in Melbourne. The book *Wrapped in a Possum Skin Cloak* by Amanda Reynolds in collaboration with Koorie artists Debra Couzens, Vicki Couzens, Lee Darroch and Treahna Hamm highlights and discusses aspects of the Tooloyn Koortakay collection currently on display in the Museum. The *Gunya Winyarr* exhibition showcased work from the artists involved. It was a celebratory night for the Koorie community and for all who were part of a cultural revitalisation project that spanned five years. It was also an opportunity to congratulate the Koorie Heritage Trust on their winning the National Governance Awards 2005.

Another remarkable project is *People of the Cedar*, an exhibition of works by First Nations people from the north-west coast of Canada. The objects on display are invested with their unique cultural knowledge, spiritual power and are some of the most stunning sculptural forms I've seen. The associated forum, *The Ancestors' Voices: Speaking through the Object*, was an inspiring cultural exchange between Indigenous Australians and First Nations people of Canada. This project has opened the door to relationships I hope will continue into the future.

Watch out for more news on the Gallery of First Australians and associated activities on the Museum website.

Craddock Morton



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS IN BRIEF



MESSAGE FROM THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PROGRAM DIRECTOR

I'm honoured to be able to work with the ATSIP team. I have been privileged, over the past 25 years, to be able to work closely with Aboriginal people in a variety of roles. All have been challenging, all have ultimately been rewarding. I see the National Museum of Australia having the great responsibility, and privilege, to contribute to communicating the incredible richness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, world views, and experiences to both Australian and international audiences. Part of this task requires the ATSIP team to assist in translating and mediating the Indigenous experience so that it is understandable to non-Indigenous audiences. At the same time we must preserve the integrity and voices of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and peoples represented in our exhibitions. The companion duty to this cross-cultural mediation involves maintaining active communication back to the communities and individuals represented within the Museum. The ATSIP team has excelled at this in the past, and I hope to contribute to its continuing success in the future.

Dr Michael Pickering



MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL ADVISOR (INDIGENOUS) AND SENIOR CURATOR

Welcome to the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander News* from the National Museum of Australia. We would like to acknowledge the Ngambri and Ngunnawal peoples of this region and other Indigenous people who have made Canberra their home.

There has been some movement in the camp and it is all good news for the Indigenous programs across the Museum. Craddock Morton, who has demonstrated such commitment to our area, has provided details of his initiative in his message.

The Museum continues to broaden and deepen Indigenous representation of Indigenous knowledge and practice in a variety of ways. Some of these are outlined by Professor Tom Griffiths in his story on the Museum's increasing academic profile describing some of our joint research projects. Dr Sue Taffe, from Monash University, similarly describes a very significant collaboration project with the Museum and a number of other cultural institutions.

Community activities and relationship building remain high on the agenda and are integral to all our activities as you will see in the following pages. There has been a concentrated effort with Torres Strait Island communities in the lead-up to the new *Dari a Krar* exhibition opening for NAIDOC Week in the first week of July. Our interest in Indigenous communities has extended to the First Nations People of the north-west coast of Canada with a series of cultural exchange programs centred on the exhibition *People of the Cedar*.

Thanks for all your great feedback. Keep it up.

Adjunct Professor Margo Neale

- >> On 18 September Barbara Paulson was MC at the Indigenous concert at Floriade featuring Kev Carmody and the Stiff Gins.
- >> Nancy Michaelis attended Imagining Childhood: Children, Culture and Community, Charles Darwin University Symposium Series 2005 in Alice Springs, 20–22 September.
- >> Shirley Brice Heath, Professor at Large, Brown University and Emeritus Professor of Linguistics, Stanford University, visited the Vicars Street repository in October to view the Winifred Hilliard Collection. She later interviewed Deaconess Winifred Hilliard to discuss her work with the Ernabella community and the children's art collection.
- >> Barbara Paulson and Carly Jia attended the Co-operative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health (CRAH) seminar, coordinated by both AIATSIS and CRAH, on 16 November in the Museum's Studio. Barbara welcomed attendees to the Museum.
- >> *Colour Power: Aboriginal Art Post 1984*, was installed in November 2005 in the Focus Gallery. The exhibition closed on 30 January 2006 and was replaced by *People of the Cedar* which runs until 28 May 2006.
- >> King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia of Sweden visited in November and were escorted through the Gallery of First Australians by Margo Neale and Andy Greenslade and through Open Collections by David Kaus.
- >> ATSIP staff attended Reconciliation Australia's launch of the *Macquarie Atlas of Indigenous Australia*, at the National Archives of Australia.
- >> David Kaus presented the following series of papers from November 2005 to February 2006:
 'Managing collections of secret/sacred material at the NMA' at the Negotiating the Sacred: Blasphemy and Sacrilege in the Arts conference, ANU; 'Aboriginal breastplates' at the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research, ANU; 'Pacific collections held by the NMA' at the Pacific in Australia – Australia in the Pacific conference, Brisbane; 'The Basedow and Milne collections' at the Makers and Making of Indigenous Australia at the Museum Collections conference, Melbourne.
- >> Nancy Michaelis chaired the 'Finding a voice for violence' session at the Pain and Death: Politics, Aesthetics and Legalities conference, 8–10 December at the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research, ANU.
- >> Margo Neale and Carly Jia visited Torres Strait Islander communities in Cairns and Thursday Island in December to research objects for the *Dari a Krar* exhibition due to open in mid-2006.
- >> Andy Greenslade and David Kaus went to Ernabella to research and further develop the Museum's collection of works from the region.
- >> Barbara Paulson visited Brisbane in February for research on a module redevelopment due later this year.

Nancy Michaelis
Curator, ATSIP



Meet some of our **Mates**



Peter Pennington

>> Peter Pennington I am a Ngarrindjeri man, from South Australia. I have two daughters and a granddaughter and grandson. I have lived in Canberra for 20 years and had various lives as we all do. I also have nine sisters and four brothers and mobs of nieces, nephews and cousins. I am Lecturer in Indigenous Health at the Australian National University Medical School which offers a postgraduate medical degree in which Indigenous Health curriculum is integrated across the four-year course. The Dean of the ANUMS is very supportive of Indigenous health being core curriculum. In 2005 students had lectures from Indigenous health professionals, Indigenous community members and others and it was all very successful. The Gallery of First Australians is a great place to begin learning about Indigenous histories. It can stimulate interests and springboard those into further research about Indigenous histories and cultures.



Marilyn Miller

>> Marilyn Miller choreographed the 'Welcome' dances in the multimedia interactive in the Gallery of First Australians. She recently gave a lecture at the Museum on the significance of each movement featured, discussing the cultural and regional representations depicted. Marilyn began her dance training as a five-year-old in Cairns, north Queensland. While still in college Marilyn was a guest artist with the Queensland Ballet and, on graduating, became the sole female co-founder of the AIDT — the Company. Apart from being a dance practitioner, Marilyn also graduated from UTS with a Business Degree and was a committee member of Ausdance Qld and Ausdance NSW. Marilyn has choreographed and danced with Bangarra Dance Theatre, the Australian Ballet, One Extra Dance Theatre, Kooemba Jdarra, FOX TV, SBS TV, and ABC TV. We look forward to collaborating with Marilyn on future Museum projects.



Dr Sue Taffe

>> Dr Sue Taffe In 1996 I had conversations with 30 people which set the direction for my life over the decade which followed. These people were former executive members of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, affectionately known as FCAATSI. Some, such as Don Dunstan and Charles Perkins, were well-known figures. Others such as Joe McGinness—who was the president of this Council, and Stan Davey—the secretary, were less well-known but their intelligent persistence and humane dedication to improving the lives of Indigenous Australians paid off. Their story had to be told. In 2001 I completed my doctoral dissertation, a history of FCAATSI from its inception in 1958 to its end as a racial coalition in 1973. (The organisation folded in 1978). *Black and White Together, FCAATSI: The Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders 1958–1975*, the resulting book, was published by University of Queensland Press last year. I am now



Raymond Blanco

working as an ARC postdoctoral fellow on an exhibition to mark the 50th anniversary of the birth of FCAATSI. In partnership with the National Museum of Australia, the National Archives of Australia, the State Library of Victoria, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and the National Library of Australia I am gathering the materials to tell the story of FCAATSI in exhibition form. A web version of the exhibition is currently in draft form at www.indigenoustrights.net.au. People who are interested in examining the site should contact Sue at Sue.Taffe@arts.monash.edu.au.

>> Raymond D Blanco (Associate Professor) — WikPajinka/Magarem, Mer Island — now based in Brisbane, has worked in the performing arts industry for 26 years. His works have taken him through regional Indigenous communities to the international stage. As an acknowledged leader in the performing arts, recognition of his talents and contribution include the Inaugural Tudawali Award for Acting, Aboriginal Artist of the Year in 1998 (NAIDOC), Ausdance Award for Contribution to Dance and Associate Professorship from Macquarie University—in recognition of 25 years in the performing arts. Raymond is currently General Manager of Queensland's premier Indigenous Performing Arts Company, Kooemba Jdarra, and is contributing to the development of a new exhibition in the Gallery of First Australians.

>> Vic McGrath is the Manager at Gab Titui Cultural Centre on Thursday Island. He wrote the original report on the arts development needs of the Torres Strait in 1995 as well as being involved in more recent similar studies. Vic served on the Museum Council in the mid-1990s and continues to sit on a number of committees which work towards furthering the arts and cultural aspirations of the Torres Strait. Vic is also a self-taught artist who continues a long tradition of working in natural marine materials provided by the seas and reefs of the region. In 1991 he undertook a study tour of Torres Strait artefacts in Britain and the USA focusing on traditional construction methods and is keen to maintain his long-term connection and support for the Museum through Torres Strait focused exhibitions such as *Dari a Krar*, currently under development.



Vic McGrath

>> Carly Jia I'm back!! I recently returned to the Museum as an assistant curator in ATSIP after spending 12 months in London. I am currently working on the development of a new permanent exhibition for the Torres Strait Islander gallery. As a Torres Strait Islander woman I am privileged and honoured to be working on an exciting project which enables me to reconnect with my community. I feel the issue of how the Torres Strait culture is displayed and interpreted is important if it is to reflect our culture authentically and respectfully.



Carly Jia

The



sign lights up the GFA

Goolarri Radio 99.7FM comes to the GFA

For a small organisation, the Aboriginal owned and run media empire Goolarri Media Enterprises of Broome, Western Australia, boasts a huge range of services. These include the television station GTV35 and television production house, Radio Goolarri, a music recording business and the Gimme record label. It also provides event management and IT services and, of course, its own registered media training organisation. Goolarri's achievements attest to the determination and resourcefulness of the many people involved, including Dot West, Mark Bin Bakar, Stephen 'Baamba' Albert and Kevin Fong among many others who have helped the organisation become a player in the media world. Goolarri has achieved this range of services with very little funding — and that only for its radio services. 'People think because we're blackfellas, we can't do it,' says Kevin Fong, Managing Director. Goolarri has certainly shown they can!

A new exhibition module titled 'Goolarri: The sounds of Broome' will open soon in the lower galleries of the Gallery of First Australians. The exhibition takes a look at the Broome region of Western Australia through the eyes of Goolarri Media Enterprises. This exhibition is a bit different from most of the other GFA exhibitions. It has a component that is truly reactive. The activity responds to the visitor and the choices they make within the exhibition. Eden Shirley heads up the Gold Coast company, Instmedia, that is building the software to run the reactive program. Eden admits to being 'rapt' by the unique project which he says is 'inspirational'. A range of infra-red and electronic touch sensors will trigger the experience as the visitor enters the studio. One of Goolarri's radio presenters will invite the visitor to make a recording, the lights will dim and the 'on air' sign will light up.

Although Goolarri trains its own professional industry staff, it still uses community volunteer broadcasters for some of its radio programs. How do you think you would stack up as a radio announcer? Well you'll get the chance to see if you have the talent for it, because the new exhibition will feature a 're-creation' of one of Goolarri's radio broadcast studios. You will be able to audition in the reactive experience for the role of 'volunteer announcer'.

Needless to say, some of the region's famous musicians are featured, for music has always been at the heart of Goolarri's activities. The featured musicians include the Pigram Brothers, Gubinge, Fitzroy Express, Lorrae Coffin, Scrap Metal, Kerriane Cox and Mervyn Mulardy. At the end of your session, you'll be able to hear a playback so you can judge for yourself just how well you performed.

Goolarri and the National Museum of Australia have also worked collaboratively to produce a documentary film on the history of the organisation, detailing the why and how of its development. It was a timely project which Dot West, Goolarri Head of Production, said 'helped us to focus on our own history'. This film will be shown in the exhibition, as will a variety of television programs made by Goolarri. Some of these are pure entertainment while some are entertainment with a socially responsible message. The wonderful Catch and Cook programs fall into the latter category. This series is a joint initiative of Goolarri Media Enterprises and the Western Australian Department of Health's Office of Aboriginal Health. It combines a trip out bush and information on eating healthy food. So, come and see Broome — Goolarri shows it so well.

Andy Greenslade
Curator, ATSIP

Pallas Masina presenting the brekky show Photo: Dragi Markovic



Melati Hunter at the heart of the organisation — in the finance section Photo: Dragi Markovic



Eddo Hine behind the camera capturing highlights of the match Photo: Jeremy Lucas



Dari a Krar

Headdresses and masks from the Torres Strait

A NEW EXHIBITION FOR THE TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER GALLERY



Allson Edrick Tabuai with his dhibal headdress



Alick Tipoti with his linocut

The National Museum of Australia is the only museum in Australia to have a permanent gallery dedicated specifically to Torres Strait Islander history and culture. The gallery opened in 2001 with an exhibition from the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. It featured the Alfred Cort Haddon collection — a priceless collection which was gathered in 1898 and which had not been seen since by local communities. In 2002, the exhibition *Paipa: Windward* was opened, examining the different migratory waves of Torres Strait Islanders to mainland Australia from the nineteenth century onwards.

We are currently developing a new exhibition for the space, *Dari a Krar: Headdresses and Masks from the Torres Strait*, to be opened in mid-2006.

'Dari a Krar' means 'headdresses and masks' in the western strait language of Kala Lagaw Ya. The exhibition will bring together a diverse collection of masks, headdresses and dance objects from the mid-1800s to the present. Traditions of mask and headdress-making have changed significantly over time. Where they were once associated with regional men's ceremonies they now appear on a more secular stage as important items of dance, theatre and art. What unites both old and new is their continuing significance to Torres Strait culture and their unique aesthetic appeal and craftsmanship. Looking at one of the spectacular articulated dance masks made by Ken Thaiday Snr today, it is apparent that we are encountering something just as skilfully constructed and visually dramatic as masks collected in the 1800s. Visitors to *Dari a Krar* will have the rare opportunity to see both old and new objects from important historical collections juxtaposed alongside their contemporary counterparts.

Each island group has its own distinct dances and dance objects, but artists and choreographers are also constantly creating new dances and dance regalia. The exhibition will feature a wide range of dance regalia incorporating both traditional and dynamic elements. All are a continuing affirmation of cultural identity and source of pride for Torres Strait Islander people.

Dari a Krar is a collaborative project between the National Museum of Australia and the Cairns Regional Gallery. The exhibition is co-curated by Anna Edmundson, Senior Curator, National Museum of Australia and Brian Robinson, Curator, Cairns Regional Gallery. Carly Jia, Assistant Curator, joined the team in November 2005 and has made two recent trips with Margo Neale to Cairns and the Torres Strait to secure new artworks for the exhibition.

The exhibition will open during NAIDOC Week 2006.

Anna Edmundson, Senior Curator, ATSIP and
Brian Robinson, Curator, Cairns Regional Art Gallery

Ken Thaiday Snr with his triple beizam headdress which
the Museum recently purchased



Photo: Dragi Markovic



First Nation artists Dempsey Bob and William White sing at the exhibition opening

The invisible world becomes visible in the stunning masks and sculptural forms of the First Nations people of the north-west coast of Canada. This exhibition is an opportunity to tell the story of the 'people of the cedar' to an Australian audience. The north-west coast of Canada has been inhabited for at least nine millennia and the culture is rich and distinctive. Many works of art in the exhibition are based on traditional items used in ceremonial and celebratory events. Art has always pervaded the life of the people, indicating the owner's social status, authority and lineage. Art was integral during potlatches (celebrations in which guests share food and receive gifts or payments) and other feasts. In winter, elaborate rituals took place in which performers danced wearing carved masks.

The featured works celebrate the artistic expression and cultural identity of Canada's First Nations people in the western province of British Columbia. It includes masks and carvings, cedar bark weaving, textiles, works on paper and paintings. Predominantly made from yellow and red cedar wood and bark, the works reflect the artists' deeply spiritual relationship to the western Canadian coast and forests.

To the artists the cedar is a spiritual tree possessing power and soul. The cedar growing through a hole in the sky was believed to be the axis of the world and a pathway to the upper world. Cedar was used for canoes, totem poles, and for the construction of big houses. Red cedar was used for big panels; yellow cedar was used for fine carving of masks, bowls and small objects. Contemporary artists continue to be inspired by the land, the animals and the cedar tree.

The co-curators are Inge Rumble of the Canadian High Commission, Canberra, and Rocque Berthiaume, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. Included are works from 25 artists from nine different First Nations groups and drawn from five collections. Artists include Dempsey Bob (Tahltan/Tlingit), Joe David (Nuu-Chah-Nulth), Freda Diesing (Haida), Walter Harris (Gitksan), Fred Modeste (Coast Salish), Glen Rabena (Yakima/Haida), Ron Sebastian (Gitksan/Wet'suwet'en) and Roy Henry Vickers (Tsimshian) and Glen Wood (Gitksan/Tsimshian). The works

People of the Cedar

Photo: George Serras



Local Ngambri Elder Matilda House welcomes to country First Nations artists and Canadian representatives, including weaver William White

showcase the many variations in technique and style which highlight the artists' direct and ongoing connection with the land and its stories, both past and present. These works prove cultural connection to time and place, in a world where other cultural, economic and political realities often collide. Truly, an exhibition not to miss!

People of the Cedar: First Nations Art from the Northwest Coast of Canada is the result of collaboration between the National Museum of Australia and the Canadian High Commission in Canberra. The exhibition is in the GFA Focus Gallery from 2 March until 28 May 2006.

Walter Harris, Raven Legend, 1974, High Commission of Canada, Australia



How Blakfellas tell history



Kevin Fong and Margo Neale

In September 2005, three cultural explorers from wintry Canberra sat down in a hot meeting room at Goolarri Media Enterprises in Broome, Western Australia, to spend a week yarning with a whole bunch of 'blakfellas' on the topic of 'how blakfellas record and tell history'. It is part of a three-year research project officially entitled 'Unsettling histories: Indigenous modes of historic discourse'. This is a joint Australian Research Council project between the Australian Centre for Indigenous History (ACIH) at ANU and the Museum. (This project is more fully described in previous issues.)

Professor Ann McGrath, Director ACIH, Deputy Director Frances Peters-Little and I listened to a range of Indigenous historians tell their stories including elder, singer and performer, Stephen Baamba Albert; satirist, singer, broadcaster and media star extraordinaire Wayne Bin Bakar (aka Mary G); radio broadcasters from One Arm Point — Corrina Ahchoo and Amie Hunter; artist Veronica Francis; tourist proprietor Debbie Sibisado; musician/songwriter Naomi Pigram and others.

We immersed ourselves in Broome culture with history in mind and experienced the many ways history is embodied and transmitted through festivals. We attended Broome's famous Shinju Matsuri Festival, which celebrates the history of pearling in Broome and its multicultural community. We got into the groove at the Paspaley lunar ball in the big top with the locals, many of whom were sporting their family heirlooms with some pearls almost the size of golf balls. We saw the parades and the Chinese dragon dance, we visited the

rich holdings of the local history museum, Lord McAlpine's house and checked out the famous dinosaur footprints. All the time, we were finding out how people know the history they know.

Our interest in the workshops was to explore how Indigenous Australians record and tell histories that have survived millennia through non-text based genres. How the visual, musical and oral delivery of history provides fresh perspectives and constructive new methods for collaboration and innovation? It became apparent that history teaching would be so much richer and absorbable if academics and community-based experts and performers collaborated to gain new understandings about Indigenous people and their history. New possibilities would enable some rethinking of historical practices, allowing plenty of room for different approaches to history to coexist in complementary harmony.

Some commonly held observations from the workshops included the well reiterated concept that 'our history is written in the county'. It is our archive. It registers every event since time immemorial. It continues to record history of all kinds — ancestral and human, geological and environmental. It is made more tangible to others through paintings and performances for example. Historians of traditional Indigenous history are those who are steeped sufficiently in law and culture to be able to read the 'text' in the features of the land. Allied to this were the ideas that Aboriginal history is always tied to place and that the expanding field of Indigenous cultural tourism and use of Aboriginal rangers has emerged as a vital way of retrieving and practising history for many Aboriginal groups, who in turn share the knowledge with non-Indigenous Australians.

The Governor-General is also thinking about how to get Indigenous history into schools. He invited the board members of the ACIH Advisory Committee to Government House in November to chat about it. Consequently the Museum and ACIH are planning workshops at Government House with educationalists from around the country. More about this in the next issue.

Margo Neale
Principal Advisor (Indigenous)
and Senior Curator

Round table discussions in Broome WA. Left to Right: Ann McGrath, Frances Peters-Little, Maria Pederson, Deborah Sibisado, Ethal McLeanen and Stephen Baamba Albert



Photo: Margo Neale

Indigenous history

Indigenous history is a vigorous field of research in Australia, and the Museum's Gallery of First Australians provides a wonderful focus and stimulus to scholars and students. The History Program in the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University has developed a particularly strong and productive relationship with the Museum in this area. At a time when universities and museums are being encouraged to foster intellectual exchange and dialogue, we can already boast a number of successful scholarly collaborations.

Three Australian Research Council Linkage Grants are currently shared by the History Program and the Museum. They sponsor research into 'Australian Indigenous collectors and collections' (through the work of doctoral scholar, Christine Hansen, with Margo Neale, Ann McGrath and Tom Griffiths), 'Unsettling histories: Australian Indigenous modes of historical practice' (Ann McGrath, Frances Peters-Little and Margo Neale), and 'The human elements: A cultural history of Australian weather' (Tim Sherratt, Kirsty Douglas, Mike Smith, Tom Griffiths, Libby Robin). In 2005, the very successful *Our Community* exhibition was curated by Frances Peters-Little, Deputy Director of the Australian Centre for Indigenous History. Gordon Briscoe AO and Tim Rowse are two other distinguished scholars in Indigenous history who are based in the History Program.

Several recent graduates of the History Program have made significant contributions to Indigenous history. Rebe Taylor, who graduated in 2004, produced a book based on her doctoral thesis entitled *Unearthed: The Aboriginal Tasmanians of Kangaroo Island* (Wakefield Press), which won the Adelaide Festival Non-Fiction Award in 2003 and the Victorian Premier's Literary Award for a First Book of History in 2004. Rani Kerin, now lecturing in Australian

Frances Peters-Little records discussions with Neil Turner, Maria Pederson, Corina Ahchoo and Amie Hunter

Photo: Margo Neale



Photo: Margo Neale

Gordon Briscoe, Ann McGrath, Margo Neale and Frances Peters-Little

Indigenous History at Otago University, New Zealand, completed a subtle study of the assimilation era in a thesis on 'Doctor Do-Good? Dr Charles Duguid and Aboriginal politics, 1930s–1970s'. Darrell Lewis drew on Aboriginal and settler sources to write a comprehensive and revealing study of the pastoral society of the Victoria River District in the Northern Territory. Kirsty Douglas analysed the poetics and politics of deep time in Australia in a thesis entitled 'Pictures of time beneath: Science, landscape, heritage and the uses of the deep past in Australia, 1830–2003'. Joy McCann has just completed a doctoral study of cross-cultural history and heritage entitled 'Unsettled country: History and memory in Australia's wheatlands'.

Margo Neale has for many years been a vibrant promoter of Indigenous history in both the Museum and the Australian National University, and her outstanding academic contribution has been recognised with her recent appointment as Adjunct Professor of the ANU, affiliated with the Australian Centre for Indigenous History in the History Program.

We cherish the dynamic intellectual chemistry of the Acton Peninsula and look forward to many more collaborations in Indigenous history between scholars of the Museum and the ANU.

*Dr Tom Griffiths
Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities
Head of the History Program, Research School of Social Sciences
Australian National University*

Corina Ahchoo and Amie Hunter catch up on news from the Museum

Photo: Margo Neale



NAIDOC Week

at the Museum 2006

This year's NAIDOC Week on the peninsula will be a mix of regular events such as the annual Didj Comp (see below), the Indigenous short film festival, storytelling and demonstrations. A feature will be the special emphasis on Torres Strait Islander culture and the opening of *Dari a Krar* — a new exhibition at the National Museum of Australia. Special guests will include performers and artists from the Torres Strait.



Kim Skorupa paints Australian animal faces on children



Photo: Dragi Markovic

Phillip Yubbagurri Brown's interactive storytelling

Another special guest will be Boori (Monty) Pryor — a visiting writer/performer-in-residence. Boori was born in Townsville, a descendant of the Kungganji and Birrigubba people of north Queensland. He has worked in the film and television industry and also theatre-in-education. He is best known as a storyteller, travelling widely to introduce his culture to young Australians.

In collaboration with Meme McDonald, Boori has published a series of books based on his life and the stories of his family. Their first collaboration, *Maybe Tomorrow* (1998), received a Special Commendation from the Human Rights Awards and their second, *My Girragundji* (1998), won a Children's Book Council of Australia Award. They have since published several more books, most notably *The Binna Binna Man* (1999) which won several awards, including the Ethnic Affairs Commission Award in 2000.

Boori is also an accomplished didjeridu player and has played with the Brisbane Symphony Orchestra. He also performed in Sydney for the Pope and 300,000 people at the beatification of Mary McKillop.

NAIDOC celebrations run from Sunday 9 July until Sunday 16 July 2006. All welcome.

Denise Fowler
Public Programs Co-ordinator

Calling all DIDJERIDU PLAYERS

DIDJ COMP 2006

The National Museum of Australia and Reconciliation International announce the second annual didjeridu competition to be held during NAIDOC Week 2006 — on Sunday 16 July, from 1.00pm until 2.00pm at the National Museum of Australia.

This year's competition will include prizes for:

- best solo didj player
- best original artwork on a didj
- best junior didj player
- most unique didj.

The competition is open to everyone and you are encouraged to register before the day. Entry is free. This year will feature a special guest celebrity judge.

Enquiries and registrations to Phillip Yubbagurri Brown on 0421 983 309 or (02) 6294 3893 or to d.fowler@nma.gov.au



Photo: Lannon Harley

2005 winner Norman Shillingsworth

Collaborating for an exhibition

Indigenous rights workshop



Photo: Barbara Paulson

Sue Taffe and the website, www.indigenousrights.net.au

In 1996–1997 Sue Taffe completed 30 oral history interviews of the leaders of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI), with the Koorie Arts Collective. Sue's research led to a doctoral thesis and publication of her book *Black and White Together* in 2004. This extensive research has now led to the development of a web-based exhibition.

The Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement, which later became FCAATSI, was formed at a meeting in Adelaide in February 1958. A federation of state-based bodies developed over the next 12 years, becoming a recognised political force which initiated campaigns for social services benefits to be extended to Indigenous Australians, for equal wages, and a referendum for citizenship rights and land rights. Many public figures, including Kath Walker (later Oodgeroo Noonuccal), Don Dustan, Faith Bandler, Gordon Bryant, Pastor (later Sir) Douglas Nicholls and Rodney Hall contributed to the campaign. The FCAATSI movement demonstrates a time when Indigenous and other Australians worked together for social and legislative reforms.

Over a two-day workshop, representatives from the National Archives of Australia, National Library of Australia and State Library of Victoria gathered at the National Museum of Australia. The topic of discussion was the research of Sue Taffe, postdoctoral fellow at the School of Humanities, Monash University, into Indigenous rights during 1957–1973 and the translation of that research into both a virtual exhibition and a possible gallery exhibition.

Group discussion in the GFA Focus Gallery, left to right: David Kaus, Sue Taffe, Margo Neale, Andrew Hiskens, Tikka Wilson, Mike Pickering and Jennifer Wilson



Photo: Barbara Paulson

Sue's research has been supported by the organisations represented at the workshop, and the gathering offered the first opportunity for the partners to discuss the project together.

The workshop began with a discussion of the web-based component, with designer Brendan O'Donnell from Art Direction Creative bringing the group's attention to the many features of the website. The group discussed the development of the site as a web-based exhibition, noting the progress already made.

The website holds great potential as an information and educational resource for schools and communities. The web exhibition will offer users access to historical documents, images and commentary via chapter and subject divisions, maps, images, a timeline and biographies of key identity as well as links to other relevant sites to make 'indigenousrights.net' more comprehensive. The web exhibition will have a life span and reach beyond the limitations of the physical exhibition, and it is hoped that it will continue to develop with user interaction and possible online forums.

In the workshop a series of brainstorming sessions occurred around the creation of an interesting and informative, three-dimensional exhibition. Key concepts and themes were discussed and recorded, with object, archival, audiovisual and interactive components suggested. Discussion centred on the collaboration between black and white communities that was so effective during these decades of campaigning, distinguishing the efforts between 1957 and 1973 from any other comparative period in Australia's history of black/white relations and human rights campaigning.

At one point the group ventured into the GFA Focus Gallery to explore options for the layout of the exhibition. Ideas flowed freely as a conceptual mud map began to take shape.

The release dates for both the web exhibition and the physical exhibition are proposed for February 2007 and 2008 respectively, with the latter planned to coincide with the 50th anniversary of FCAATSI. The initial version of the website can be viewed at www.indigenousrights.net.au.

Jennifer Wilson
Curator, Gallery Development

ATSIP NEWS

All articles by Barbara Paulson unless otherwise stated.



Nancy Michaelis, Barbara Paulson, Mike Pickering, Andy Greenslade, Carly Jia

Photo: Margo Neale

Hello Mike!

Dr Michael Pickering takes over as the new Head of the ATSIP team. For the past four years Mike has been the Repatriation Program Director at the National Museum of Australia. He has previously worked as Head Curator with the Indigenous Cultures Program of Museum Victoria, Native Title Research Officer with Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, Regional Officer with the Northern Territory Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority, an anthropologist with the Northern Land Council, and as a consultant archaeologist and anthropologist. His research interests and publications include studies on material culture, Aboriginal archaeology and anthropology, Indigenous heritage management, and repatriation. Welcome aboard Mike.



Jarrah, Yaaran and Maddie dance accompanied by Vicki and Cindy on the clapsticks at the launch

Photo: Barbara Paulson

Wrapped in a possum skin cloak

Congratulations to Amanda Reynolds, Debra Couzens, Vicki Couzens, Lee Darroch and Treahna Hamm on the publication of *Wrapped in a Possum Skin Cloak: The Tooloyn Koortakay Collection in the National Museum of Australia*. The book highlights and discusses aspects of the collection currently on display in the Gallery of First Australians. The official book launch was held in October 2005 at the Koorie Heritage Trust in Melbourne. It coincided with the *Gunya Winyarr* (women's cloaks) exhibition featuring works by each of the artists. The launch was a night of celebration and acknowledgement of all the people involved in the project — artists, agencies and the Koorie community, particularly the Yorta Yorta and Gunditjmara communities.

This project is a demonstration of the Museum's commitment to creating opportunities that maintain a meaningful relationship between people and material culture held in the safekeeping of the Museum's collection. Lee Darroch expressed the importance of maintaining these relationships in a sentiment about the Tooloyn Koortakay collection: 'It's a gift back to the next generation.'

The Museum was delighted to collaborate with the Koorie Heritage Trust to host the event and looks forward to working together in the future. *Wrapped in a Possum Skin Cloak* is available for purchase from the Museum Shop or the Koorie Heritage Trust for \$19.95.



Koorie Heritage Trust curators Tim Church (left) and Nerissa Broben (right) with Museum curator and book author, Amanda Reynolds (centre) admire a possum skin cloak by Vicki Couzens

Photo: Barbara Paulson



Vic McGrath, Carly Jia, Jesse Sagaukaz and Margo Neale at Gab Titui Cultural Centre on Thursday Island

Photo: Dragi Markovic

Margo and Carly's trip to the Torres Strait communities

Margo Neale, Principal Advisor on Indigenous Matters and Carly Jia, Curator, journeyed to far north Queensland in December 2005 on a targeted collection project which took them to various Torres Strait Islander communities, including Cairns and Thursday Island. Margo and I met with a number of renowned master craftspeople including Ken Thaiday Snr, Victor McGrath, Allson Edrick Tabuai, Alick Tipoti and Rosie Barkus to commission works for the new exhibition being developed for the Torres Strait Islander gallery as well as for the Museum's collection.

Carly Jia
Assistant Curator, ATSIP



Hilary Furlong, outgoing coordinator of Ernabella Arts Inc., with a Pitjantjatjara inti/spindle. Because of its traditional and contemporary significance the inti is the symbol used in the art centre's logo

Photo: Andy Greenslade

Visiting Pitjantjatjara communities

In December, David Kaus and I headed off to Alice Springs and then out to some of the communities on the Pitjantjatjara lands. We went to consult, research, document and acquire collection material. Our trip began at Uluru and the community at Mutitjulu. Maruku Arts, which is best known for marketing the carved woodwork traditionally decorated with pokerwork, has its base at Mutitjulu. We visited three other communities — Amata, Fregon and Ernabella. We marvelled at the differences and similarities of the works produced at these centres and at the changes in production that have taken place in the last five to ten years. The most significant change perhaps is the active participation of men in what were traditionally 'women's centres'.

The Museum holds an extremely strong collection of cultural material relating to Ernabella. This is a great research resource, which we hope to update with material selected on this visit. More about this significant addition to the Museum's collections in the next issue.

Andy Greenslade
Curator, ATSIP



Visit from Tranby Aboriginal College

Near the end of 2005 it was my pleasure to conduct an education/professional development session for a group of Indigenous students and staff from Tranby Aboriginal College. The group was introduced to the exhibitions in the Gallery of First Australians, to museum practices as well as strategies to engage school students with Indigenous cultures and history. Teacher, Darryl French, was very happy with the group's level of engagement and said that they appreciated the warm hospitality, active participation and lively discussion, all of which made for a thoroughly enjoyable experience. The group's visit to Canberra was relevant to the Advanced Diploma Aboriginal Studies course they are undertaking at the college.

Trish Albert
Senior Indigenous Education Officer

Back row: Phil Awang (bus driver), Kaya Carson (student), Kaila Riley (student), Cheryl Stockwell (college staff), Elizabeth Locke (student), Linda Bolt (college staff), Dianna Chapman (student) and Marley Nelson (student)

Front row: Sylvia Nelson (student), Trish Albert (Museum staff), Darryl French (teacher), Elizabeth Sheppard (student) and Christine Gallagher (student)

Photo: Alison Beasley



Creating Pathways

Barbara Paulson attended the Creating Pathways conference in October 2005 to start researching for a new permanent exhibition in GFA exploring the importance of dance in Indigenous culture. The conference was a national dance forum coordinated by Ausdance and held at the Museum. The conference discussions focused on current and future developments needed to advance professional opportunities for Indigenous artists. The sessions were informative and at times emotionally charged. There were approximately 40 invited Indigenous artists as well as Ausdance and industry professionals in attendance. The participants communicated their excitement, energy and engagement via performance—with singing, dancing and storytelling. Personal tours of GFA were conducted for artists, some of whom had travelled to Canberra from remote parts of Australia and had never visited the Museum before.

Back row, left to right: Dalisa Pigrum (WA), Barbara Paulson, Kath Papas (Ausdance Vic), Bronwyn Liddle (Vic), Sarah Calver (Ausdance NT)

Front row, left to right: Li-Anne Carroll (Ausdance WA), Sermsah Bin Saad (WA)

Photo: Margo Neale



Photo: George Serras

Visitors to the newly refurbished 'Open Collections'

Open Collections has reopened

Open Collections is an interesting and often surprising part of the GFA tour. It is an opportunity for visitors to sample the diversity of Indigenous material culture held within the Museum's collection. Objects are displayed in a way similar to how they would be in storage, giving visitors a 'behind-the-scenes' experience of the Museum. The refurbishment began at the end of 2005 and finished in March 2006 incorporating new shelving, lighting and other features which assist in the care, storage and display of objects. Maps are located in each bay showing which area of Australia objects come from. We look forward to keeping you posted on further developments in the coming year.

Can you guess what this mystery artefact is?

COMPLETE THE WORD SEARCH FOR CLUES

WORD SEARCH: SAIBAI ISLAND

A	Z	E	H	E	A	D	D	R	E	S	S
O	T	G	S	M	P	M	I	T	Q	D	A
T	O	N	C	A	A	C	N	U	F	B	I
I	P	O	G	T	N	R	G	R	E	K	B
A	R	G	S	X	D	E	H	T	N	A	A
R	E	U	O	V	A	O	Y	L	E	L	I
A	S	D	M	W	N	L	X	E	C	A	I
S	D	O	O	F	U	E	T	E	K	L	S
P	E	A	R	L	S	H	E	L	L	A	L
L	I	W	E	A	V	I	N	G	A	G	A
S	A	G	Y	F	I	S	H	X	C	A	N
E	D	R	P	A	N	F	R	Y	E	W	D
A	X	C	O	M	M	U	N	I	T	Y	Y
S	A	W	X	C	N	S	E	C	N	A	D

Community	Fish	Saibai Island
Coral	Foods	Sea
Creole	Headdress	Turtle
Dance	Kala Lagaw Ya	Weaving
Dinghy	Mats	Yams
Dugong	Pandanus	

Now that you've finished the word search, complete the name of the mystery artefact.

__ e __ __ __ s __ __ __

__ __ __ k __ __ __ e.

Students handle fabulous artefacts when they participate in an education program at the National Museum of Australia. Check out the programs and resources that the Education section offers at www.schools.nma.gov.au. You can also speak directly to the Senior Indigenous Education Officer about the Indigenous programs for school students and adult groups. On page 13 read about the experiences of a group of adults and students from Tranby Aboriginal College.

Reconciling a



Glass platter made by Warburton Aboriginal Community artists, a Corroboree 2000 gift from the WA State Reconciliation Committee

Photo: George Serras

The National Collection holds a number of items that stand out from the general assortment, in view of their wide-ranging appeal or historical value. There are also collections of items, of varying shapes and sizes, which together present an overall picture of an event, time, place or community. It is a collection of the latter type which both excites and challenges a curator.

Part of the collection being assessed by Jennifer Wilson, Curator, and Maria Wasson, Documentation Officer

Photo: Dragi Markovic



collection

A selection of cardboard hands decorated by Australian children for the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation



Photo: Jennifer Wilson

As part of a search for future exhibition materials, I began an assessment of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation collection. An assessment of a collection is part of a wider museum process for the recording of information and research about items and their origins. What began as a simple process ended up as a six-month research project.

Corroboree 2000 banner signed by members of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation
Photo: Jennifer Wilson



Assessment of the collection involved tracing the history of the council and its activities, which received both criticism and praise. It became clear that the significance of the collection lay not in its related monetary values, but in its collective statement. The collection is an important opportunity to document the history of reconciliation as it was presented by the council through media promotion, public education, and projects of community collaboration.

The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation was established in 1991 following a unanimous decision by Federal Parliament to recognise the importance of reconciliation and create a formal reconciliation process, outlined in the *Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act 1991*. A goal of increased awareness and achievement in the area of reconciliation by the year 2001. In that ten-year period the council established a program of extensive community consultation. The publicity generated brought issues of reconciliation to the forefront of discussion and debate.

In June 2000, with the official activities drawing to a close, some of the materials produced by or presented to the council and its members were donated to the National Museum of Australia for posterity. At the official handover event Sir Gustav Nossal, Deputy Chair of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, stated that the items 'represent the future of reconciliation as well as the history of the Council' (NMA press release, 2000). The collection, donated between 2000 and 2002, includes photographs, documents, banners, posters and cultural material — a total of 111 separately listed items.

During the collection research, I was fortunate enough to receive assistance from members of Reconciliation Australia. As the independent foundation formed by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation at its time of closure, Reconciliation Australia has continued and extended the council's work.

Jennifer Wilson
Curator, Gallery Development

Other important acquisitions...



Photo: Dean McNicol

Basket 2003 by Muriel Maynard. On display as part of the Tasmanian Community exhibition in upper GFA

- >> Aboriginal breastplate for Toby of Vanrook
- >> Aboriginal breastplate for Count Dorsay
- >> Aboriginal breastplate for Wanney (1861)
- >> Boomerangs, club and shield of north-western New South Wales
- >> *Untitled* (1966) bark painting by Thancoupie (Gloria Fletcher)
- >> *Massacre at Mistake Creek* (1997) painting by Queenie McKenzie
- >> *The Coming of the First Missionary* (1981) painting by Dick Roughsey
- >> *Reconciliation* painting by Bessie Campbell
- >> *Fanny, Mary and the Cross* (2001) painting by Joel Birnie
- >> Triple Hammerhead Shark Headdress (2005) sculpture by Ken Thaiday
- >> Hammerhead Shark Headdresses (2005) by Ken Thaiday
- >> Trent Griffiths collection (1970s and 1980s) artefacts and sculptures from central Australia





Nautilus shells 2003 collected by Muriel Maynard

Next issue

Highlights from NAIDOC Week 2006, the launch of the *Dari a Krar* exhibition, Goolarri 'On Air' and activities of the visiting First Nation artists from Canada. Learn more about the objects in our collection in particular those recently purchased from the *Gunya Winyarr* exhibition. Hear updates on new and continuing projects.

Meet some more of our Mates in ... August/September 2006.



Nautilus shells 2003 collected by Muriel Maynard

Mates of the Gallery of First Australians

has been established in response to widespread interest from Indigenous communities and supporters of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander program.

Our aim is threefold. We seek to:

- strengthen our connections with communities and supporters
- gain support and advice on collections, exhibition development and other programs
- encourage endorsement of the Museum throughout the community.

(See enclosed nomination form to join today for FREE.)

Benefits

As a 'Mate of the Gallery of First Australians' you are entitled to a special offer from the larger group, **Friends of the National Museum of Australia**. Join now and get three months membership FREE. Contact the **Friends** on (02) 6208 5048, or email friends@nma.gov.au. Make sure you mention 'Mates Rates'. Other benefits for the Mates of the Gallery of First Australians are continuing to be negotiated.



Shell necklace 2003 by Lola Greeno

**NATIONAL
MUSEUM OF
AUSTRALIA
CANBERRA**

National Museum of Australia

GPO Box 1901, Canberra ACT 2601 Australia

Telephone: (02) 6208 5000 or 1800 026 132

Fax: (02) 6208 5398

Email: Mates@nma.gov.au

Website: www.nma.gov.au

Opening hours: 9.00am to 5.00pm daily
(except Christmas Day)

The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
News from the National Museum
of Australia* can be downloaded from
our website www.nma.gov.au

If you do not wish to receive future
newsletters please let us know.

The National Museum is an Australian Government Agency

Frieze 2000 by Chili Films with Penny McDonald (Producer),
Michael Riley (Director) and Warick Thornton (Cinematographer)

