

ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER

news
FROM THE NATIONAL
MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA



NAIDOC Week 2006



Totems and Turtles



'Dhari a Krar' opens



Pacific encounters

NATIONAL
MUSEUM OF
AUSTRALIA
CANBERRA

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Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander News

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Main: Jon Juda, Caleb Juda (Tjungundji) and Phillip Yubbagurri Brown, photo: Dragi Markovic

Left: Banduk Marika and Dempsey Bob at the opening of *People of the Cedar* exhibition, photo: George Serras

Middle: Rosie Barkus at the opening of 'Dhari a Krar' exhibition, photo: Dean McNicoll

Right: Tongan dancer from the Pacific Festival held at the Museum, photo: Dragi Markovic

Gallery photos (these pages)

Left: Inside *Cook's Pacific Encounters* exhibition, photo: Dragi Markovic

Middle: Inside 'Dhari a Krar', photo: Dean McNicoll

Right: Entrance to 'Goolarri: The sounds of Broome' interactive exhibit, photo: Dean McNicoll

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA



Photo: George Serras

Welcome. We acknowledge the Ngambri and Ngunnawal peoples, the traditional custodians of the Canberra area.

Since the last issue, I have had the pleasure of participating in the official launches of 'Dhari a Krar: Headdresses and Masks from the Torres Strait', the new exhibition in our Torres Strait Islander Gallery, and the publication *Keeping Culture: Aboriginal Tasmania*, edited by Amanda Reynolds and featuring nine contemporary Aboriginal writers, artists and advocates on the cultural traditions of Tasmania. Being the public face of the Museum at openings and celebrations that mark the culmination of a lot of hard work is a part of my job that I really enjoy.

The Gallery of First Australians actively explores new ways to communicate the experiences of Indigenous people, culture and history. The new 'Goolarri: The sounds of Broome' interactive exhibit celebrates contemporary Indigenous expressions from north-west Australia. It illustrates the successful process of continuing culture through fusing old traditions with new forms of communication.

All programs across the Museum continually demonstrate commitment to supporting Indigenous communities through projects and events that positively showcase the living cultures of Indigenous Australia. In particular the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program (ATSIP), Principal Advisor (Indigenous) and Public Programs teams have engaged with artists, performers and storytellers to provide forums for cross-cultural dialogues which captivate and inform us all.

Watch out for more news about the Gallery of First Australians and associated activities on the Museum website, www.nma.gov.au.

Craddock Morton

Inside Cook's Pacific Encounters



Photo: Barbara Paulson



MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL ADVISOR (INDIGENOUS) TO THE DIRECTOR, AND SENIOR CURATOR

Welcome to the sixth issue of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander News*. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this area, the Ngambri and Ngunnawal peoples, and others who are now part of our Indigenous Canberra community.

The Museum's commitment to strengthening and diversifying activities in the Indigenous area continues to expand, deepen and extend its reach in sustainable ways. This commitment is felt and seen from Lake Mungo to Arnhem Land and from Japan to Canada. While a lot of this is visible to Canberra visitors to the Museum, much of it isn't. In this issue you will read about some of these activities. In addition to exhibitions and interpretation visible in the Gallery of First Australians, public programs and education services, there is, behind the scenes, the less visible engagement with communities and collaborations on scholarly films and significant research projects, publications and conferences.

There is the development of educational readers for Rigby publications and others interested in focusing on Indigenous art and culture in Australia. There are new alliances with universities on significant projects and new partnerships with the Yothu Yindi Foundation and the Garma Festival. There is hardly a section in the Museum that is not expanding its engagement in Indigenous programs. For example, Friends of the Museum (affiliate program) run an excellent book-reading workshop series on Indigenous biographies. They attract speakers such as Jackie Huggins, Larissa Behrendt and Stan Grant to talk about their own writings. The Visitor Services section of the Museum also has an active Indigenous employment policy and this month employed four new Aboriginal starters with appropriate mentoring, training and retention programs in place.

Margo Neale
Adjunct Professor

Photo: George Serras



MESSAGE FROM THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Welcome. We acknowledge the Ngambri and Ngunnawal peoples, the traditional custodians of the Canberra area.

It's been a busy period for the ATSIP team. Over the past six months we've had new staff come on board, the opening of the Torres Strait Islander Gallery exhibition 'Dhari a Krar' and the opening of the 'Goolarri' radio studio. Both exhibits are stand-out pieces and have proved very popular. This is a reflection not only of the time and effort put into their development by the team but also, and more importantly, the strength of the Indigenous experiences they communicate. Both exhibitions were driven by community input and our thanks go to all the communities and individuals involved.

The Museum celebrated NAIDOC Week 2006 with a great program of events which capitalised on the newly launched exhibitions as well as including both the local and national Indigenous communities, artists, performers and storytellers who shared their stories and knowledge to great applause. Amanda Reynolds is to be congratulated for her work with the Tasmanian Aboriginal community which culminated in the production of the book *Keeping Culture: Aboriginal Tasmania*. There continues to be significant engagement with communities including the repatriation of human remains and the ongoing training in museum practices at Lake Mungo. The Museum has also become enthusiastically involved in the Australian Public Service Indigenous Graduate Program. These activities will be profiled in future issues of the magazine.

The ATSIP team is currently developing a number of temporary exhibitions as well as pursuing the maintenance and development of exhibits in the permanent galleries. There are important Indigenous stories and histories waiting to be told and we continue to assist in their telling.

Dr Michael Pickering

Inside 'Dhari a Krar'



Entrance to 'Goolarri: The sounds of Broome'



ATSIP HIGHLIGHTS IN BRIEF

- » In April — David Kaus published an article on breastplates, a subject he has been researching for many years, in the *Unreal Shields* catalogue. He also attended the Appin Massacre Memorial Ceremony held at Cataract Dam in New South Wales.
- » Dot West and Kevin Fong, of Goolarri Media Enterprises, visited the Museum in April to see the latest developments in the 'Goolarri: The sounds of Broome' exhibition.
- » Narayan Kozeluh, Advisor for the Ampilatwatja community of the Sandover River Area in the Northern Territory, also visited the Museum during April.
- » 6–15 April — Barbara Paulson travelled to Walgett to install the *Our Community* exhibition and represent the Museum at the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service's 20th anniversary celebrations.
- » 21 April — Barbara Paulson travelled to Brewarrina to interview Mayor Ted Simpson, to discuss the representation of his story in the Museum's Gallery of First Australians.
- » 25–27 April — Michael Pickering was an invited keynote speaker at The Museum: A World Forum conference. His paper 'Where to from here? Repatriation and "the Museum"', focused on the opportunities available for international museums to benefit from experiences associated with repatriation programs. He also delivered a paper on repatriation at the Australian High Commission in London in May.
- » 19 June–23 July — *Our Land is Alive* exhibition from the Central Land Council was installed in the Gallery of First Australians Focus Gallery.
- » 6 July — Jay Arthur and Kipley Nink attended the Australian Historical Association's Genres of History conference at The Australian National University. They also attended the Aboriginal Hostels Luncheon for NAIDOC Week.
- » 20 July — Sarah Robertson delivered a paper, '2005 NMA travel scholarship to the United Kingdom', as part of the Museum's lecture series in the Friends Lounge. Sarah also presented a paper '*Cribrā orbitalia* as a correlate of sedentism' at the annual Australasian Society for Human Biology conference at the University of New South Wales.
- » 28 July — Ian Coates chaired a session of a public symposium, *Discovering Cook's Collections*, held in the Museum's Visions Theatre. Kipley Nink, David Kaus and Nancy Michaelis attended the symposium.
- » 30 July — David Kaus and Michael Pickering attended the Lake Mungo Festival launch at Mildura.
- » 25 August — Lee Burgess, Andy Greenslade, Jay Arthur, Barbara Paulson, Kipley Nink and Margo Neale attended the *Being Collected* forum at the Macleay Museum at the University of Sydney.
- » 7 September — Barbara Paulson delivered a paper 'Presenting Indigenous knowledge and culture inside a museum' at the Indigenous Knowledge in the Workplace conference held at AIATSIS.
- » Dr Sue Taffe from Monash University is working as a consultant with ATSIP on the *Civil Rights* exhibition project.
- » Gwen and Wayne Masters visited the Museum. The Masters donated a collection from the Kimberley region in 1982, and on their behalf, a second donation was formalised earlier this year.

Nancy Michaelis
Curator, ATSIP



*New staff in the
ATSIP team include
(left to right)
Jay Arthur,
Ian Coates and
Kipley Nink*

Photos: Barbara Paulson

HIGHLIGHTS IN BRIEF FROM THE OFFICE OF PRINCIPAL ADVISOR (INDIGENOUS) TO THE DIRECTOR, AND SENIOR CURATOR

- » Craddock Morton (Director) has set up a special projects office to enable the Museum to focus on the wider Indigenous field, nationally and internationally. This will further enhance the Museum's role in the academic area and be proactive in engaging with significant community events.
- » Abby Cooper and Benita Tunks represented the Museum at the Garma Festival, which is held annually in Arnhem Land. They conducted workshops on how the Museum delivers cultural programs and the new *Museum-in-a-Case* travelling exhibition and education kit based on the possum skin cloak exhibit developed by our team. The Museum will continue to sponsor future Garma Festivals, and negotiations are in train to partner with the Yothu Yindi Foundation to curate touring exhibitions of works from the artists workshops held at Garma.
- » The documentary *Frontier Conversations* was launched in Canberra by Craddock Morton, and in Sydney by Peter Garrett. The documentary is another successful outcome from our collaboration with the Australian Centre for Indigenous History (ANU), focusing on Indigenous history-making that Professor Ann McGrath and I worked on with Yale University. Other collaborations focusing on Lake Mungo and Kalkaringa are in production.
- » As project editor of the Rigby series of children's books focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, I am pleased to announce that Trish Albert, senior Indigenous education officer, completed the first three manuscripts (of 18).
- » In September, I was part of a delegation of 15 Australians, from galleries and museums, invited to participate in an Australia–Japan Visual Arts forum, organised by Asialink Australia, held in Tokyo, Japan.
- » Papers I have recently delivered include, 'Recognising Indigenous knowledge' at the Indigenous Knowledge in the Workplace conference at AIATSIS; 'Ancestor's voices' for the Ancestor's Voices: Speaking through the Objects forum at the Museum; 'Art as history' at The Australian National University, and 'Indigenous views of early coastal contacts' at the Strangers on our Shores conference held at the Museum.
- » Recent visitors have included Gaby Hollows from the Hollows Foundation; Helen Garnett, vice-chancellor, Darwin University; academic Rocque Berthiaume, head of the Freda Diesing School of Art at the University of British Columbia; artists Dempsey Bob and William White, both from Canada; Dr Peter Veth, Deputy Director (research), AIATSIS; Japanese curator Yusuke Minami from the National Arts Center, Tokyo; and our regular Jilpia Jones from AIATSIS.

Margo Neale
Adjunct Professor



*(left to right)
Benita Tunks,
Margo Neale and
Abby Cooper*

Meet some of our Mates

» **Lewis Beale** Hello! I'm Lewis Beale. I am from Walgett and I've lived in the district all my life. I've worked at everything from station hand to cook and various other things, because you have to be versatile when you live in the country. Once I had the pleasure of cooking for the Queen's representatives when they visited Walgett. I am happy to see this exhibition, *Our Community: A Great Place to Be*, come to Walgett. It brings back a lot of good memories. The images are unreal! They bring forward the feelings you have for the people pictured, who are around me — who live in this community, in my community.

The *Our Community: A Great Place to Be* photographic exhibition is a joint project between The Australian National University's Australian Centre for Indigenous Histories, and the National Museum of Australia. It explores the concept of 'community' in multicultural rural Australia. The exhibition toured regional NSW.

» **Christine Corby** I was born in Sydney. I am part of the Gamilaroi nation (my mother's family). I completed year 10 and couldn't wait to work! In those days there was plenty of work. Moving to Walgett in 1975, I worked with the Aboriginal Legal Service (1975–1986) and the Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service (WAMS) (1986–2006). Exciting times, and wonderful experiences for me. Working at WAMS from its inception could not be achieved without support from the local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community. People still believe today that WAMS is only for Aboriginal people — that is not the case. The community work we conduct as a team was reflected in our recent 20th birthday celebrations in April 2006.

I was surprised to receive a Centenary Award in 2001, and even more shocked to be awarded an OAM in 2006. The community of Walgett is often placed in a negative light — that sells papers I suppose. There are, however, many milestones in Walgett that all members of the community should wear with pride, the evidence of which will never disappear as the memories will always remain in bricks, mortar and people. Having the *Our Community: A Great Place to Be* exhibition in Walgett has provided local people with an opportunity to see what can be done from their own town to gain positive recognition beyond our levee banks. This exhibition will showcase how Walgett is a great place to live, people are friendly, and cohesion can exist between cultures. I hope that the memories of the exhibition will dispel the myth of the 'wild west' of New South Wales — it isn't so wild!

» **Sharon Goddard** I feel privileged to introduce myself to you as a 'Mate'. I grew up in Canberra and have had my fair share of changes in life and career. Six years ago I quit work to study art history and curatorship at The Australian National University. In July 2005 I enrolled in the honours seminar course on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art convened by Luke Taylor and Wally Caruana. For me, this opened the doors to the rich and diverse world of Indigenous art and culture and provided valuable background for my thesis research into Indigenous textile design.

After seeing the textile display in the Gallery of First Australians at the Museum, I contacted curator Andy Greenslade who was able to arrange generous access to the extensive collection of Ernabella and Utopia batik in the Mitchell repository. Since graduating, my partner and I have been to Darwin for a two-week holiday that included the Selling Yarns conference held at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory in August.

» **Jay Arthur** I'm back at the Museum after some years working in other institutions, and very pleased to be here. While I was away I worked mostly at the National Archives of Australia developing exhibitions on a diverse range of topics — from working animals, to Australian lighthouses, to the work of Walter Burley Griffin.

Now I'm here with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program. It's very good to be working on Indigenous history again, which I have been very involved with in the past. One of my first experiences in that area involved driving around the Northern Territory with my husband and two small children (and the family dog), collecting stories from Indigenous communities about the early days in the Territory.

My present work involves more driving a desk than driving a Toyota but it's nonetheless interesting! Kipley Nink, another newcomer to the section, and I are developing an exhibition on the movement for Indigenous civil rights of the 1950s and 1960s.

» **Peter Thorley** I now work in the Repatriation section at the Museum, having spent most of my career working with Aboriginal communities and organisations in Central Australia. I have also been a teacher and teacher-linguist and, more recently, a consultant in heritage protection, native title and archaeology. The Museum is a great place to work. It gives me an opportunity to communicate some of the knowledge and experience I have gained working with Indigenous people to a general audience. Every day I feel really blessed, being able to work in such a stimulating environment.

» **Kipley Nink** Hello, I've been working at the Museum for six months now in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program, and I think it's great here. The people are creative and really fun to be around. Before I came to the Museum I majored in Indigenous Studies at The Australian National University (1999–2005). It took a long time to finish uni because I went to Indonesia for almost three years from 2001 to 2003 where I studied at a university in Yogyakarta, Central Java. I lived in South Sulawesi, where I collected stories from Indonesian fishing communities, including oral histories from Indonesian fishermen who fish in waters between Indonesia and Australia. At the moment I'm working on an exhibition with Sue Taffe and Jay Arthur about the fight for civil rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the 1950s and 1960s. Hopefully you'll hear more about this project in the next issue!



Lewis Beale

Photo: Barbara Paulson



Christine Corby

Photo: Barbara Paulson



Sharon Goddard

Photo: Barbara Paulson



Jay Arthur

Photo: Dean McNicol



Peter Thorley

Photo: Dean McNicol



Kipley Nink

Photo: Dean McNicol

NAIDOC Week 2006

Writing, singing, dancing, painting, filming, telling and sharing stories at the National Museum of Australia.



Phillip Yubbagurri Brown's cultural workshop



Torres Strait Islander dance group Beizam Koedal



Torres Strait artist Billy Missi

Winners of the National Museum of Australia didjeridu competition — Jon and Caleb Juda (Tjungundji)



Photo: Lamon Harley



Storytelling with Larry Brandy (Wiradjuri)

NAIDOC Week was again a busy, vibrant, noisy time at the National Museum of Australia. This year there was a welcome colourful tropical influence in the middle of the Canberra winter because of the number of special guests from the Torres Strait.

Torres Strait Islander artists Billy Missi, Alick Tipoti, and Sammi Savage demonstrated their art and ran printmaking workshops. Much of their intricate artwork depicted stories and legends from the Torres Strait Islands.

Beizam Koedal, a Canberra-based Torres Strait Islander dance group, performed to celebrate the opening of the new exhibition at the National Museum of Australia, 'Dhari a Krar: Headdresses and Masks from the Torres Strait'.

Writer/director Rima Tamou was the special guest for the Indigenous short film festival, which showcased Indigenous short films from around the country. Rima spoke of the importance of films as a storytelling medium. Rima's film *Sa Black Thing* featured in the festival.

Writer/storyteller-in-residence Boori Pryor entertained almost 500 children and carers with his mix of performance, storytelling and didgeridu playing. Boori shared a story from his country which, apart from the English translation, had changed little in the 20,000 years of telling.

Storytellers throughout the week included Larry Brandy (Wiradjuri), Phillip Yubbagurri Brown (Kabi Kabi) and Katrina Solberg (Kamilaroi/Gamilaroi). They had children up dancing, learning how to hunt an emu, and getting their faces painted.

The finale of the NAIDOC Week activities at the Museum was the second annual didgeridu competition run in association with Phillip Yubbagurri Brown and Corrobboree College. The event attracted an audience of over 400 people and resulted in John Juda winning the best solo player and Caleb Juda winning the best junior player. Jon and Caleb are from the Tjungundji people of Cape York.

Jon and Caleb have recently performed in the Gallery of First Australians as part of the regular didgeridu performances on the last Sunday of every month. Other regular performers include Paul House (Ngambri), Phillip Yubbagurri Brown (Kabi Kabi) and Duncan Smith and Wiradjuri Echo (Wiradjuri).

Denise Fowler Public Programs Coordinator

Torres Strait Islander printmaking workshop



Beizam Koedal dancer Timmy Cornforth



Boori Pryor storytelling workshops

Photos: Dragi Markovic

People of the Cedar

First Nations Art from the Northwest Coast of Canada



Photo: George Serras

Dempsey Bob demonstrating carving techniques

When you show your art, you show your face **Dempsey Bob**

Among the many similarities that exist between Canada and Australia, the relationship with Indigenous people is one of the most prominent. In both countries Indigenous communities are struggling for their rights, based on ancestral laws and prior occupancy. And in both countries Aboriginal people have used 'art' as visual representations of tradition.

The *People of the Cedar* exhibition of art from the northwest coast of Canada in the Gallery of First Australians was widely declared 'unbelievably stunning'. Visitors were not only seduced by the exhibitions aesthetic power but also its cultural potency. You could not help but feel that you were sharing a space heavily populated with centuries of ancestors who both concealed and revealed themselves through their many manifestations. The invisible was made visible by the multiple masks. There were monster birds, cannibal ravens, the omniscient eagle, wild spirits and delicate humanoid figures of ancestors.

William White and Dempsey Bob performing at the official launch



Photo: George Serras

Eagle transformation mask, 1975, Glen Rabena, High Commission of Canada, Australia

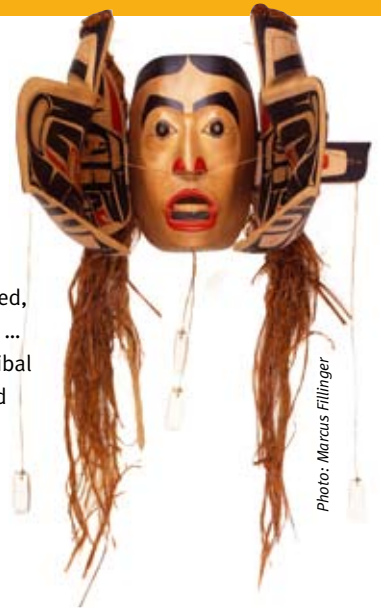


Photo: Marcus Fillingier

As Australian National University academic Melinda Hinkson observed, 'Collectively they stare at you from ... the wall like members of a multi-tribal nation'. (1) They were accompanied by other ceremonial marvels, such as a huge feasting bowl in the form of a wolf, exquisitely carved totem poles, an intriguing array of shamanic implements, and woven cloaks and capes.

People of the Cedar was an inspired collaboration between the Museum and the Canadian High Commission in Canberra, advocated by our Director, Craddock Morton. It brought together five Australian-based collections: most notably from the Canadian High Commission's own substantial collection (assembled in the 1970s), the Canadian Consulate in Sydney (collected in the 1970s and 1980s), the Australian Museum (acquired in 1911), the National Gallery of Australia (assembled by Max Ernst in the 1940s), and the Melbourne Museum (acquired by Baldwin Spencer in the early 1900s). It is the first of its kind in Australia and has prompted academic Rocque Berthiaume (co-curator from the University of British Columbia with Inge Rumble from the High Commission) to track down more collections in Australia.

Ancestor's Voices: Speaking through the Object

A stirring wolf dance and chants by ceremoniously clad Tahltan/Tlingit spokesperson Dempsey Bob, and Tsimshian weaver William White, animated the exhibition launch in the Garden of Australian Dreams. Ritual gift-giving to the local Indigenous peoples further dignified the occasion. A forum followed in which an invited panel of Australian Indigenous artists including Banduk Marika from north-east Arnhem Land and Vic McGrath from the Torres Strait exchanged views with a panel of Canadian Indigenous cultural practitioners on the cultural and political role of objects and cultural continuity. The sponsors, Alcan, were well represented on the day.

Margo Neale

Principal Advisor (Indigenous) to the Director, and Senior Curator

People of the Cedar: First Nations Art from the Northwest Coast of Canada was exhibited in the Gallery of First Australians, National Museum of Australia, from 2 March to 28 May 2006. It was opened by Banduk Marika, accompanied by a forum on 2 March and followed by Dialogue Canada as part of the Federation Dialogues series on 5 March 2006, broadcast on ABC Radio National. It has precipitated ongoing partnerships including an exhibition tour to New Zealand in 2007, artist residencies at the Freda Diesing School, British Columbia and a joint PhD project between the Museum and the Australian Centre for Indigenous History (ANU). The Canadian High Commission continues its support and involvement in these and future projects.

(1) M Hinkson, *Art Monthly*, no. 188, April 2006, pp.12 ff.

'Dhari a Krar' exhibition

launched during
NAIDOC Week
celebrations

A number of people from the Torres Strait Islander community braved the Canberra cold to attend the opening of our new permanent exhibition, 'Dhari a Krar: Headdresses and Masks from the Torres Strait'. The exhibition, which replaces 'Paipa', in the Torres Strait Islander Gallery, was opened as part of this year's NAIDOC Week celebrations at the Museum. 'Dhari a Krar', which means 'headdresses and masks' in the western Torres Strait language of Kala Lagaw Ya, showcases a wide range of masks, headdresses and dance objects from Torres Strait Islander artists, past and present.

Following a very popular performance by the Canberra-based Beizam Koedal dance group, the exhibition was opened by the Museum's Director, Craddock Morton.

Carly Jia, co-curator of the exhibition, acted as MC and speeches were given by Awa Benny Hodges, one of Canberra's Torres Strait Islander elders, and senior curator Anna Edmundson. Brian Robinson, consultant curator from the Cairns Regional Art Gallery, unfortunately couldn't make the launch due to work commitments. He was sorely missed.

We felt pleased to have so many members of the Torres Strait Islander community attend and express a positive response to the show. We were also privileged to have contributing artists Rosie Barkus and Alick Tipoti attend the opening. The launch was enlivened by an impromptu dance performance by Alick as a form of blessing of the gallery and the exhibition. Alick, along with fellow artists Billy Missi and Sammy Savage, hosted a very well received printmaking workshop as part of the Museum's NAIDOC Week celebrations.



Members of the Beizam Koedal dance group in the Main Hall of the Museum

Curators Carly Jia and Anna Edmundson with artist Alick Tipoti next to one of his artworks in the exhibition



Photo: Dean McNicol

Rosie Barkus in front of her dhari motif textile at the 'Dhari a Krar' exhibition

In his speech, Uncle Benny Hodges commented on how important it was that the Torres Strait Islander community was represented in institutions like the National Museum of Australia so that the wider public could come to appreciate the strength and diversity of Torres Strait Islander culture.

His speech reiterated the two main messages that underlie this exhibition. Firstly, that Torres Strait Islanders do not possess one single culture but rather came from diverse island groups, each with their own distinct history and island customs. Secondly, that Torres Strait Islanders have maintained a strong sense of culture and identity. They have worked hard to keep their unique *Ailan Kastom* alive.

We hope that this exhibition helps to introduce a wide range of Australians and international visitors to the continuing art of Torres Strait masks and headdresses.

Anna Edmundson

Senior Curator, ATSIP and Co-curator, 'Dhari a Krar' with Carly Jia, Senior Policy Advisor, International Repatriation Program, Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination



Photo: Dean McNicol

Lake Mungo workshops

In March 2005 I spent two weeks in picturesque Lake Mungo, in western New South Wales, training local Aboriginal people in managing collections of artefacts. There are three tribal groups responsible for the Lake Mungo area — Barkindji, Muthi Muthi and Nyiaampaa — and trainees were drawn from all three. It was a hands-on workshop with artefacts from the area, both wooden and stone, worked on in the training program. Under the guidance of the Three Traditional Tribal Groups Elders Committee, we implemented a program that took the trainees through all the steps in managing collections and explained the reasons behind each of the processes involved. Collections of artefacts acquired by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service were worked on. They are soon to be transferred to the Three Traditional Tribal Groups.

After an initial on-site inspection of the collections, we returned to Mildura to gather together supplies and people. The following day we had a planning meeting at Balranald, before the trainees and I went on to Lake Mungo. The first



Photo: Courtesy MMA

Trainees (left to right) Judy Mitchell, Ian Slade, Tanya Charles, Mary Pappin, David Kaus (senior curator), Joan Slade (elder)

couple of days were spent familiarising ourselves with the collections, and cleaning the room where the artefacts were being stored. Taking one collection at a time, objects were sorted, named, photographed and numbered, before being allocated a permanent storage location. Information was recorded electronically. All the trainees practised each aspect of the work and now have the knowledge and understanding to manage these important collections, and others that are to return to Lake Mungo.

Planning is well advanced for a Keeping Place to be built on land owned by the Three Traditional Tribal Groups that adjoins Lake Mungo National Park. It will be staffed by local people who now have the expertise to manage, at a high level, the collections that will be housed there.

David Kaus
Senior Curator, ATSIP

Under Southern Skies

'Under Southern Skies' is a new exhibit in the Horizons gallery that explores themes of astronomy and archaeology and makes connections between Aboriginal and European cultures. Aboriginal people are considered the world's first astronomers and have a complex system of knowledge and beliefs about the heavens, handed down through song, dance and ritual for over 40,000 years. This knowledge informs the law and ways of living and provides seasonal calendars based on the movement of the constellations throughout the year. The exhibit features a bark painting, *Wuripirimba Constellations* (Southern Cross), by Wanungwamagula Nandjewara from Groote Eylandt. The Southern Cross was one of the constellations new to travellers from Europe to the Southern Hemisphere, who were unfamiliar with some of the southern constellations. The exhibition displays some of the items used by these voyagers as they discovered for themselves the true



Photo: Barbara Paulson

New introductory exhibit in Horizons gallery

contours of the Australian continent. The exhibition also features a bark painting, *Macassan Prau*, by Mathaman Marika, which depicts four Macassan sailors arriving with the north-west monsoon, recording another group of travellers who navigated their way to the Australian shores.

Michelle Hetherington, *Curator, Gallery Development*
Jay Arthur, *Curator, ATSIP*

A taste of the Pacific at the Museum

An afternoon of Pacific encounters saw the Museum's Main Hall come alive with dance, music, craft displays and children's activities on Sunday 6 August. The afternoon, which celebrated Pacific Islander cultures, focused on some of the countries featured in the exhibition *Cook's Pacific Encounters*.

To kick-start the afternoon, Beizam Koedal, a Canberra-based Torres Strait Islander dance group, showcased traditional dance in dramatic and theatrical fashion complete with spectacular costumes and impressive headdresses.

Then Torres Strait Islander singer/songwriter Monwell Levi (Moa Island) entertained the audience with his contemporary music and the unique sound of his own songs.

Meanwhile, children were enthusiastically occupied making paper headdresses and watching a demonstration of weapon-making by Cairns-based Torres Strait Islander performer and artist Samuel Savage (Erub Island), who skilfully carved and strung a bow and arrow.



Samuel Savage's weapon-making demonstration



Tongan Catholic Choir

Other performances during the afternoon included the swaying dances of the beautiful Hawaiian, Tahitian and Tongan cultural groups and the powerful Haka dance by Maori performers, Te Rere o te Tarakakao. There was also a Tongan Catholic choir singing traditional and modern Tongan hymns. And who could miss the excitement of the children who proudly wore the colourful leis and headbands they made during the workshops.

The afternoon of free performances and activities was a lively event which entertained Museum visitors and brought a taste of Pacific Islander cultures to Acton Peninsula.

Mary Tallarida

Events Coordinator, Public Programs and Events

*Maori dancers
Te Rere o te Tarakakao*

*Singer/songwriter
Monwell Levi*

*Tongan
dancers*



ATSIP NEWS

All articles by Barbara Paulson unless otherwise stated.



Lainie Schultz

Photo: Barbara Paulson

International intern

Hi, my name is Lainie, I'm from Boston, Massachusetts, USA. I came to the Museum on an internship to learn more about repatriation and the processes involved. I have been working with Michael Pickering, David Kaus, Sarah Robertson and George Taylor in the Museum's Repatriation Unit. They have made my visit not only educational but also enjoyable. One of the highlights of my time here was a trip (driving on the left side of the road) down the south coast to Eden. I am going from here to the Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver, Canada. There I will be a research assistant and a doctoral student assisting in many projects including the reworking of the museum's visible collection in consultation with Indigenous Canadians to reflect Indigenous meanings instead of western classifications.



Garry Donnelly in front of his artwork

Photo: Barbara Paulson

Garry Donnelly helps raise funds for cancer research

Garry Donnelly, an artist from the Gunditjmarra/Gunai nations in Victoria, visited the Museum and had a quick tour of the Gallery of First Australians. He came to Canberra for the official unveiling of his work. Garry was commissioned by B&D Roll-A-Door to paint an anniversary edition Roll-A-Door as part of their 50th Anniversary celebrations. The imagery he uses draws from his clan's unique symbolism. 'Gunditjmarra and Gunai paintings are traditionally very intricate and contain symbolism that relates to the natural environment,' he said. 'I'm proud to be part of this. The door was donated to Cure Cancer Australia to raise funds for cancer research. Cancer affects all Australians.' The painted door was displayed in the Museum's Main Hall from 3–7 July.



(left to right) George Taylor (assistant curator), Adrian Andy, James Nye, Trevor Wellington, Karen Lee (project manager), Ronald Nye and Trish Ellis (Chairperson of the Cobowra Land Council and Senior Cultural Heritage Officer) Photo: Barbara Paulson

Cobowra Land Council visits the Museum

In May, trainee site officers from Cobowra Land Council visited the Museum and the Repository (stores) at Mitchell as part of their training program. The Cobowra Land Council is currently participating in a heritage assessment on the Deua River catchment and an archaeological dig in Bungendore. Trish Ellis, chairperson of the Cobowra Land Council and senior cultural heritage officer, said: 'During field work the trainees see artefact remains mostly as flakes or in broken forms. At the Museum they get to see what the artefact looked like whole and how they were put together. They get an overall sense of what went together to make an artefact, to make objects like spears.' The highlight of the visit was seeing objects from the Janet Masterson collection, which includes artefacts made by Percy Mumbler who was from the Moruya area, where Cobowra Land Council is situated.



Artists Dempsey Bob (centre) and Laurie Nilsen (right) meet for the first time at an informal BBQ hosted by Paul House (left)

Photo: Barbara Paulson

Totems and Turtles: Making Indigenous Art in the 21st Century in Canada and Australia

Our art is going to change, it is going to be different, but it is going to be ours. **Dempsey Bob**

In March the Museum, in collaboration with the Canadian High Commission, hosted a dialogue between Aboriginal artist Laurie Nilsen from Queensland and Canadian elder Dempsey Bob from British Columbia, moderated by myself. We compared notes on issues and concerns, and failures and successes encountered by these two contemporary practitioners from opposite sides of the world. One of the topics raised by Dempsey Bob was '[how] people confuse tradition with authenticity'. The packed house was treated to a smorgasbord of emotions, insights and intellectual fervour.

Margo Neale

Principal Advisor (Indigenous) to the Director, and Senior Curator



Delegates at the summit

Photo: Courtesy Dept. Education, Science and Training

Australian History Summit

In August I was invited to represent the Museum at the Australian History Summit at Parliament House, along with 22 other leading historians, educators and public commentators to discuss the history curriculum in schools. The Hon. Julie Bishop, Minister for Education, Science and Training, stated at the opening of the summit that 'Young Australians should study the past to understand the present, so that they can make informed decisions for the future.' Jackie Huggins and I talked about ways of strengthening the teaching of Indigenous history in schools to a receptive summit. In the lead-up to the summit I received invaluable input from a range of Museum staff and academics including Emeritus Professor John Mulvaney, Professor Isobel McBryde, Professor Graeme Davison, Professor Ann McGrath and Professor Peter Read.

Margo Neale

Principal Advisor (Indigenous) to the Director, and Senior Curator



Ralph Marshall (cameraman), Cole McIntyre (sound recordist), Margo Neale (interviewer), Jeremy Lucas (director), Janice Peacock (artist/ interviewee) during interviews held in Brisbane 2005

Photo: Barbara Paulson

Who You Callin' Urban?

Who You Callin' Urban? is a vox populi being produced by the Museum. It is a short film that will be placed at the beginning of the upcoming exhibition, *70% Urban*. The film will introduce visitors to the diversity of Indigenous opinions on the term 'urban' and why it is culturally significant and, at times, contentious. It contains a medley of opinions from all 23 participants interviewed, including artists, performers, writers, directors, academics, curators and activists. The interviews were conducted by Margo Neale and Anna Edmundson. The participants were chosen for their relationships with, and standing in, their communities as well as their previously articulated knowledge and opinions on the subject of 'urban' Indigenous living, life, culture and cultural material.

The *70% Urban* exhibition will be open to the public from March 2007 in the Gallery of First Australians.



(left to right) Margo Neale, James Wilson-Miller (Senior curator, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney), Dawn Casey (Director, WA Museum) and Barbara Paulson

Photo: Lee Burgess

Being collected

In September members of the ATSIP team attended the Being Collected forum held at Macleay Museum in Sydney. Keynote speakers were Dawn Casey, Warren Mundine and Jenny Munroe. Discussions explored a range of ways Indigenous people can and do engage with museums, and the future role museums can play in sharing knowledge. Also raised were issues such as the type of museum practices that hinder and those that encourage significant engagement by Indigenous people and communities. One of the more passionate debates focused on the type of objects museums collect, and how the objects that represent contemporary and recent Indigenous history are not seen or understood as prevalent or significant. Objects such as crochet blankets, teapots and funeral hearses may fall outside the usual associations or stereotypes of what represent Indigenous people, culture and history, but are a significant part of life and therefore history.

Breastplates



A selection of breastplates acquired by the National Museum of Australia in 2004 Photo: Dragi Markovic

What are breastplates? They are usually crescent-shaped, flat or slightly bowed metal plates hung around the neck with a chain. The name of the wearer was engraved on the front, often with a fictitious title like 'king', 'queen' or 'chief', along with a place or 'tribe' name. Some bear an inscription only; others are decorated with images such as kangaroos, emus, scenes or flourishes. Breastplates are often beautiful items displaying the exquisite skills of some engravers. This belies some of the more sinister happenings that breastplates have come to represent for Aboriginal people. Breastplates were often given out to individuals selected by non-Aboriginal officials or pastoralists looking for someone to act as an intermediary between Aboriginal people and the colonialists. Frequently, those chosen were not in a position of authority within their community but due to various factors were selected to liaise with, translate for and represent their community. In such cases this bestowal of authority, or at least aspects of it, by an outsider diminished the authority of the elders in the community, thus contributing to the breakdown of traditional society in some places.

Breastplates, however, do not generate only negative connotations and there are many stories of Aboriginal people who wore them proudly. Some were given to people as tokens of friendship or as rewards for service or acknowledgment of brave deeds such as saving people from drowning.

Over the past couple of years, the Museum has been expanding its collection of Aboriginal breastplates. Why has the Museum targeted breastplates? Many were given out in the colonial period and they are among the few cross-cultural items that survive from this time.

David Kaus
Senior Curator, ATSIP

Lionel Rose:

Lionel Rose is a man who needs little introduction. He is perhaps best recognised as the first Indigenous Australian to become a world boxing champion. After he defeated Masahiko 'Fighting' Harada in Tokyo in 1968, 250,000 fans lined the streets of Melbourne to welcome the new world champion back from Tokyo. If that wasn't enough, Lionel Rose is also recognised as being the first Indigenous Australian of the Year, receiving the commendation in 1968.

Awarded the Order of the British Empire for his contribution to sport, Lionel Rose proved his ability to rise from the obscurity of an impoverished and remote Aboriginal settlement in regional Victoria to World Bantamweight Champion, and is living proof of the boxing adage that 'hard

Lionel Rose in full boxing stance

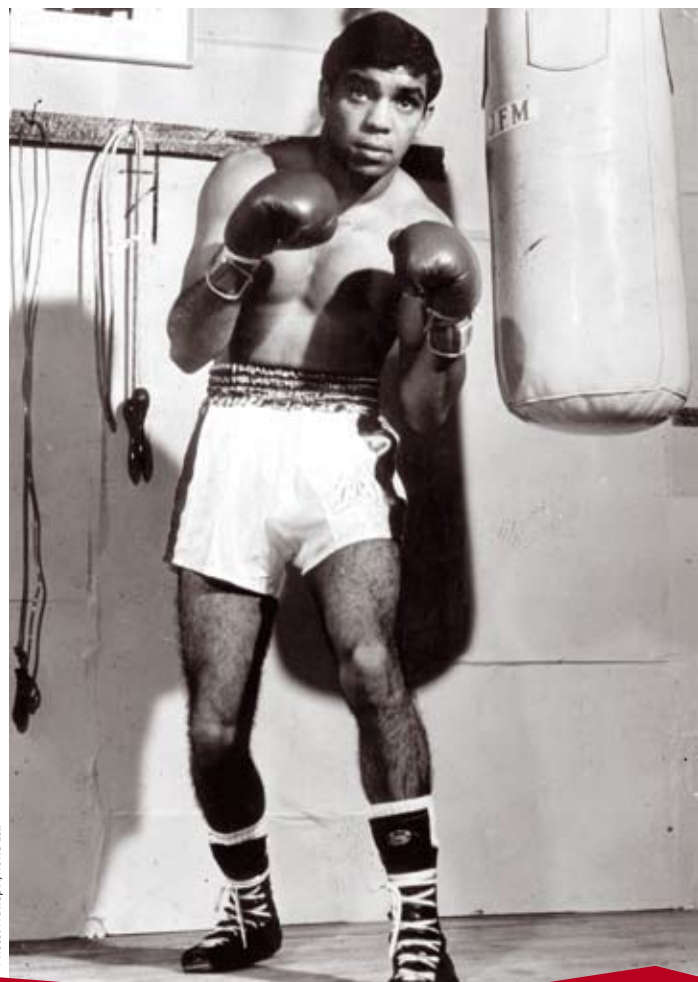


Photo: Newspix/News Ltd

Boxing champion and cultural icon

times breed the best fighters'. As a professional boxer, he compiled a record of 53 wins and 11 losses with 12 wins by knockout.

During time off from boxing, Lionel Rose started a successful singing career, with the songs 'I thank you' and 'Remember me' becoming hits in 1970. But in more recent times, he has travelled the country and encouraged Aboriginal people to achieve their ambitions.

In 2000, the National Museum of Australia purchased a pair of Lionel Rose's boxing trunks which he wore at the pinnacle of his boxing career. The shorts hold a special significance to Australian sporting history, Indigenous Australians and all those who have followed the career of this remarkable man.

Aaron Pegram

Curatorial Assistant, Content Development

Boxing trunks worn by Lionel Rose at the height of his career



Photo: Dean McViecoll



Photo: Courtesy Tjanpi Aboriginal Baskets

»» *The Tjanpi 'Wild Harvest' Family* is a sculpture that features in a new exhibit recently installed in the Nation gallery. The native harvest exhibit explores the emerging bush food industry. Created by Tjanpi Aboriginal Baskets weavers, Jennifer Mitchell, Noeline Baker, Panjiti Mackenzie and Nyunkana Baker in Alice Springs, the woven grass artwork records and communicates the significance of wild harvesting practices to people throughout Central Australia.

George Main

Curator, Gallery Development

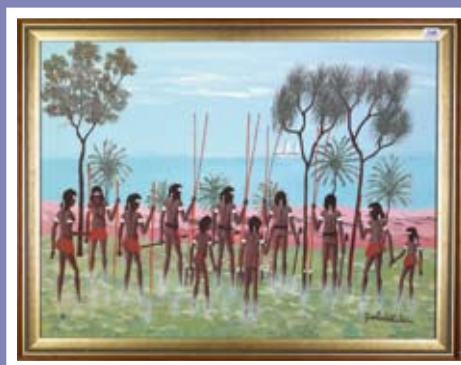
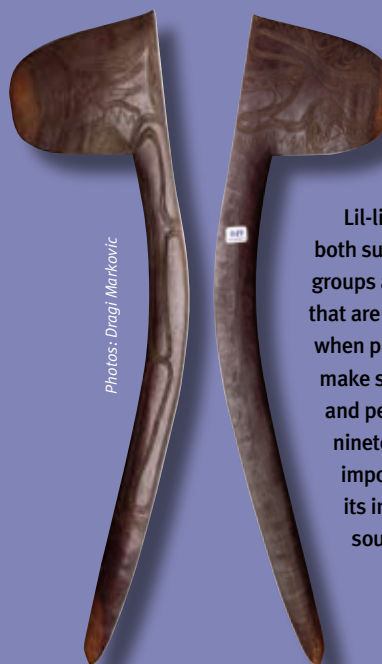


Photo: Dragi Markovic

»» *The Coming of the First Missionaries* 1981, painting by Dick Roughsey (Goobalathaldin) OBE, (1920–1985). Roughsey, a Lardil painter, children's book author and illustrator, was born on Mornington Island (Queensland). The painting is his personal representation of an event repeated across coastal Australia — that is the first contact between European missionaries and Aboriginal people.

Kipley Nink

Assistant Curator, ATSIP



Photos: Dragi Markovic

»» A burnished, wooden Lil-lil club incised with a design on both surfaces (shown). Aboriginal groups across Australia have designs that are uniquely theirs and which, when presented in particular order, make strong statements about group and personal identities. This rare nineteenth-century artefact is an important acquisition because of its intricate design particular to south-east Australia.

Kipley Nink

Assistant Curator, ATSIP

Next issue highlights

- Kimberley Girl workshops and other Goolarri 'On Air' activities
- the opening of the *70% Urban* exhibition
- more objects from our National Historic Collection
- updates on new and continuing projects
- the launch of *Keeping Culture: Aboriginal Tasmania*, edited by Amanda Reynolds, featuring nine contemporary Aboriginal writers, artists and advocates on cultural traditions of Tasmania, including mutton-birding and fishing

Meet some more of our Mates in ... March/April 2007.

Yawkyawks (mermaid) ancestral figure by Lulu Laradjibi

Yawkyawks (mermaid) ancestral figure by Marina Murdilnga

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 **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.



Photo: Dragi Markovic

Fish hooks display inside Cook's Pacific Encounters exhibition

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(closed 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.



Inside 'Goolarri: The sounds of Broome'

Photo: Dean McNeill