

ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER

news
FROM THE NATIONAL
MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA



*A Different
Time*



NAIDOC
Week



Fighting
for Rights

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Cover photos

Main: Kristy Smith and Trevor Reid in Open Collections – Gallery of First Australians

Bottom Left: Neighbour 1928
Photo: Herbert Basedow

Bottom middle: Larry Brandy conducts cultural workshops at NMA

Bottom right: John Maynard at the *If it wasn't for them...* forum

Gallery photos (these pages)

Left: Double outrigger canoe named Kulba saibai

Middle: Inside *A Different Time* exhibition

Right: Utopia Room inside the *Emily Kame Kngwarreye* exhibition

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA



Welcome. I'd first like to acknowledge the Ngambri and Ngunnawal people of the Australian Capital Territory. I'd also like to acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples whose stories we try so hard to present through our exhibitions and activities.

The Museum has been very active in the area of Indigenous histories over the past six months. Not just in the development of new stories but in the acquisition of some major collections of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural material. These range from the beautiful and forthright *Can you Imagine, Mum's Story* by Peta Edwards, to the recent acquisition of important collections of objects from south-east Australia and early works from Papunya artists. These collections will allow the Museum to present the rich histories and legacies of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures for years to come.

An important aspect of the Museum's Indigenous collection strategy is that it goes beyond the aesthetic. The Museum seeks objects that tell and support deeper stories ranging from the very personal to the national. It is the stories that make an object live. I'm confident in this regard that each new addition to our collection has brought new life to the Museum.

Once again, I hope you enjoy this issue and I invite you to engage with the Museum's activities in the future.

Craddock Morton

Inside Dhari a Krar Exhibition





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

Welcome to the tenth issue of the Museum's *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander News*. I would like to acknowledge the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people of this region and the many other Indigenous people who have made Canberra and region their home.

2008 has been a big year for us: we got our long awaited apology from the government; our voices were heard at Prime Minister Rudd's 2020 Summit at Parliament House and we saw Australia's first solo international blockbuster by an Aboriginal artist — in fact the first by an Australian artist. The Museum's international travelling exhibition, *Utopia: the Genius of Emily Kame Kngwarreye* received critical and popular acclaim here and in Japan to a level that was beyond our wildest expectations. The Japanese claim that the exhibition is '... the most successful contemporary art blockbuster ever seen in Japan, breaking Andy Warhol's 10-year record by 40,000 visitors', such is the drawing power of Emily's vision. In Canberra's short season it attracted just over 30,000 visitors with many from interstate. Go Emily!

Meanwhile on the home front, the Museum is equally proud of its ongoing commitment to Indigenous cultural awareness, programs, employment and training. Visitor Services have new Indigenous staff and continue to work with the Australian Public Service Commission Indigenous entry level programs and provide work experience for a number of Indigenous students. Phil Graetz, our Workplace Relations Manager and our staunchest advocate, undertook a full immersion cultural awareness program himself in the central desert last month. It was a pilot cross-cultural leadership program called 'Walking in Two Worlds' at the Ntwerle Homelands, 80 kilometres south-east of Alice Springs.

Margo Neale



MESSAGE FROM
THE ABORIGINAL AND
TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER
PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Hello and welcome to the latest news from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander program. I'd like to open by acknowledging the Ngambri and Ngunnawal people of Canberra and the region.

The pace over the last six months has not let up for the ATSIP team. NAIDOC Week was particularly busy. As well as the normal celebrations we also celebrated the 70th anniversary of the 1938 Day of Mourning with a special forum involving the families of those present on that significant day. We have also had an important exhibition featuring the photographs of Herbert Basedow, scientist, anthropologist and explorer. Recently we opened the ReCoil exhibition, on tour from Artback NT. ReCoil presents a beautiful selection of fibre works from across Australia.

We are also in the final stages of preparing a resistance exhibition module. This will present four case studies of Indigenous responses to white settlement. It's a significant exhibition in that it carries the story of resistance beyond the force of arms to include the power of personality and identity as tools of survival.

Of course, only a small part of our work emerges as exhibitions. Behind the scenes we regularly host tours for visiting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, travel to communities for consultations and to collect stories, provide support for Indigenous students and curators, provide advice to government, and information to media and foreign dignitaries. We also continue to acquire significant collections that will help tell stories of Indigenous histories and cultures, past and present.

Michael Pickering

Inside *A Different Time* Exhibition



Inside *Emily* Exhibition



Meet some of our **Mates**



Christine Hansen

>> Hi. I'm Christine Hansen and I currently work as a curator in the ATSIP team at the Museum. I'm also a PhD student writing about Indigenous material culture and contemporary history. As part of my studies I'm working with a community in southern New South Wales. They have lots of great stories to tell.

It's fun working in the Museum because I get to research and talk about our national treasures. My favourite part of the job as a curator and historian is hunting out stories that the public has not yet heard and finding objects to tell those stories in the exhibitions. My favourite exhibit in the GFA is the 'firewall'. It's part of the stone tools module, and I like it because it is informative, attractive and witty. The 'firewall' visually presents the practice of traditional knowledge in the contemporary world. The large graphic of an Indigenous ranger back-burning in Kakadu National Park is applied over the Museum's emergency fire hose and emergency phone, demonstrating the kind of sense of humour that blackfellas can relate to.



Annie Wallock

>> Hi! I am Annie Wallock, an international student from Wisconsin, USA. I am currently living in Canberra attending the Australia National University for my postgraduate study in Museum Studies and Collections. Over a four week period I participated in a dynamic internship at the National Museum in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSIP) Program. During my time in ATSIP, I was involved with a number of insightful projects; one in particular was an assessment of a collection from the Woorabinda community in Queensland. This targeted collection is part of a larger exhibition module involving missions that were in existence throughout Australia. This internship not only provided me with a much wider knowledge of the policies, practices, and procedures involved in curatorial work but also gave me a deeper understanding of the history and social/political struggles of the Indigenous people of this land.



Radayne Tanna

>> My name is Radayne Tanna. I'm from Gimoy (most of you would know it as it's English name — Cairns). I am a freelance artist practising in both contemporary art and Tjabukai traditional art practices. I work across all media but favour digital imaging. I also conduct cultural workshops and cross-cultural programs. I've been to Japan six times on cultural exchange programs, and to further my studies of Japanese language and culture. I also conducted Aboriginal cultural education in Japanese schools and cultural exchanges in Canada and the USA. I danced at two powwows which was the 'deadliest' experience I've ever had. One was in Cold Lake, the other in Saddle Lake, both in Canada.

I work as a Visitor Host in the Museum and have been in Canberra now for two years. I love the Gallery of First Australians; I also love the Garden of Australian Dreams. It is an artist mapping of Australia's cultural landscape. It is an expression of the diverse ways we see and experience our landscape. All visitors have a reaction to it, either positive or negative, everyone has some kind of response to it. I also like the way it connects all the galleries and spaces within the Museum, both physically and in the abstract.

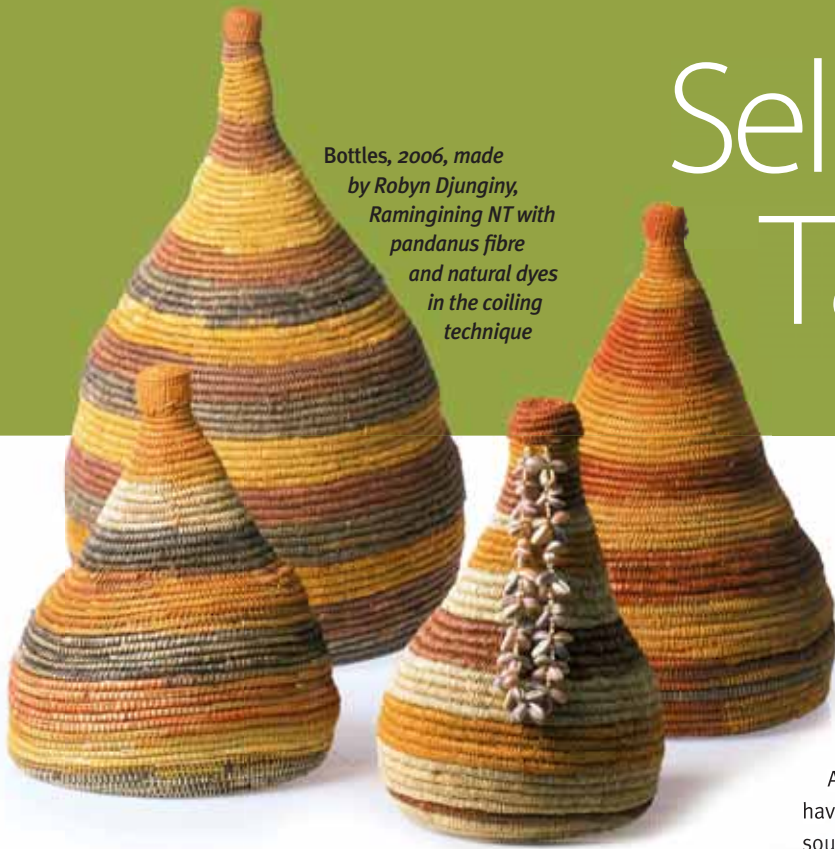


Kristy Smith

>> Hi! I'm Kristy Smith. I work as a Visitor Host in the Museum. My mob's from Wollongong and I came to Canberra to work at the Museum. At first it was overwhelming with the amount of information to take in, but after a few days you get a sense of everything. Visitor Hosts are all about customer service and understanding how to effectively communicate with the diversity of people who visit the Museum. It is wonderful working in the Museum because I came from a retail background where people didn't really care about your culture or your background or even focus on cultural or cross-cultural knowledge sharing. Now it is something I do every day and I really love it! I even get to learn about other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures from all around Australia. I'm pleased to be working here and having the opportunity to learn about all the cultures and histories that make up our great country. I now understand what it really means to be a proud Australian.

Selling Yarns – Talking Fibre

Bottles, 2006, made
by Robyn Djunginy,
Ramingining NT with
pandanus fibre
and natural dyes
in the coiling
technique



Many fibre and textile practitioners will converge at the Museum in March 2009. They'll be presenting aspects of their work at a conference, *Selling Yarns 2: Innovation for Sustainability*, which is being organised jointly by Craft Australia, the Australian National University and the National Museum of Australia.

Across Australia there are many vibrant and varied fibre work traditions. Over recent years fibre work seems to have experienced what is almost a seismic shift in practice and emphasis. Perhaps it was the faithful — and cheap — 9 litre plastic bucket that has ensured that fibre work was no longer bound by a functional imperative giving textile artists more freedom to move into the creative realms of art. The *Tjanpi Toyota*, though perhaps not the first, is probably the best known Australian example of stunning use of fibre techniques in sculpture.

Selling Yarns 2 is being held in association with the exhibition *ReCoil: Change and Exchange in Coiled Fibre Art*. This exhibition, curated by Margie West with Indigenous curator Karen Mills, opened in November and will be on show during the conference. In it is the work of many of Australia's most exciting weavers.

Below left: Baskets by Tjanpi Desert Weavers at the Selling Yarns market, 2006

Below right: Panjiti McKenzie spinning at the Ernabella spinning workshop, Selling Yarns 2006

The conference has been planned to give fibre artists the chance to share ideas and experiences and to be part of a mentoring program. Presenters such as Indigenous Business Australia will contribute to the debate on ways of being successful and viable in your craft practice.

But it isn't just an occasion for those heavily involved in yarn or fibre practice. *Selling Yarns 2* will attract many who are interested in what is happening in all the many guises of fibre work across Australia and the Pacific region. And with *Selling Yarns 2* we hope to have a very particular resonance for weavers and fibre workers in the south-east of the country which has rich traditions and some new and emerging practices.

Selling Yarns 2 will have a number of strands to the event. The first of these is the two-day conference, with short and lively presentations designed to suit a broad audience. Those who want to read more detailed presentations will be able to access some of the published papers later in the new e-journal on the Craft Australia website.

The second strand of *Selling Yarns 2* is a truly varied program of workshops and demonstrations that will take place in the public spaces within the Museum. The half-day workshops will give participants a good chance to learn a new skill or to improve on what they already know, while some of the demonstrations will give visitors the chance to watch a skilled practitioner and have a tryout.

And if this isn't enough, the third strand of *Selling Yarns 2* will be a craft and design mart, a marketplace where finished work from a number of communities and independent fibre workers can be examined and purchased direct from the maker!

Registrations for the conference will open shortly. You'll find the conference program at the *Selling Yarns 2* website at www.sellingyarns.com along with the schedule of workshops, demonstrations and events.



Andy Greenslade
Curator, ATSIIP



NAIDOC Week at the



Photos: Jennifer Nagy

Curious minds at NAIDOC on the Peninsula



Larry Brandy's workshop



Dancing with Wiradjuri Echo during NAIDOC Week

With Canberra the focus city for this year's NAIDOC Week, the National Museum of Australia was pleased to be part of the plethora of activities including sports, arts, crafts, forums, concerts and ceremonies conducted over the week across the national capital to celebrate and highlight Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and achievements.

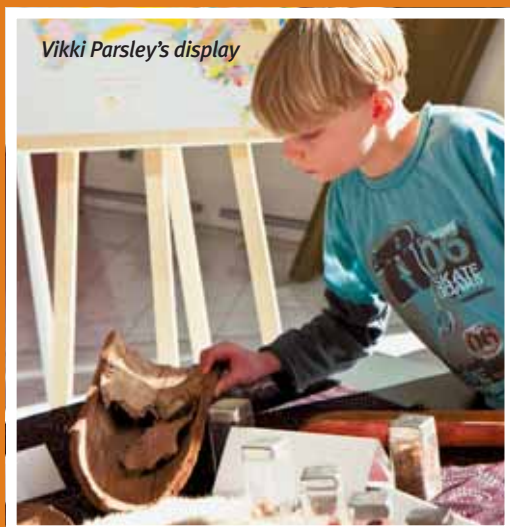
NAIDOC Week started at the National Museum on Sunday 6 July with the fourth annual didjeridu competition, presented in association with 'Corroboree Man' Phillip Yubbagurri Brown. The didj comp awarded Lewis Langton best solo didj player, Dale Elliott best original artwork, Chris Brown best junior player and most original didj was awarded to Duncan Ott. The competition entertained an audience of 250 enthusiastic visitors in the Hall.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, Wiradjuri Echo presented three dance workshops for 80 young people and their families in the Gallery of First Australians (GFA). Duncan Smith and his group of dancers/musicians ochred-up the participants and taught them about

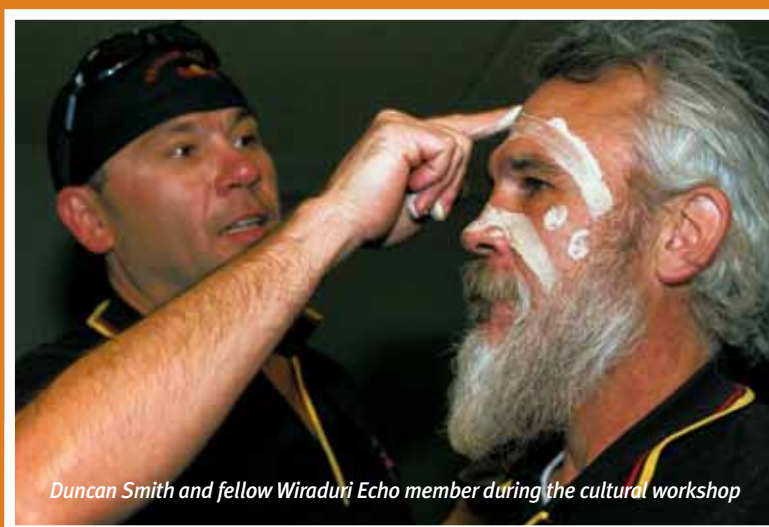
the stories behind the dances as well as the dances themselves. Wiradjuri Echo also taught the parents songs so that when everyone kicked up their heels and symbolically threw boomerangs as part of this corroboree, they became a living exhibit for other visitors to the Welcome space of GFA.

Neatly tying in with this year's NAIDOC Week theme *Advance Australia Fair?* was the protest forum, *If it wasn't for them ...* marking the 70th anniversary of the Day of Mourning, when Aboriginal people protested in Sydney. This was to remind their fellow Australians that there was another side to the 1938 celebrations of the sesquicentenary of the arrival of the British at Farm Cove. Australia has a rich history of political activism by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, including William Barak's 1886 petition to the Victorian Government, the Yirrkala bark petition, the Gurindji 'walk-off', the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, and footballer Nicky Winmar's famous baring of his chest to the crowd in Victoria. This forum highlighted the benefits contemporary society enjoys because of past actions of strength and courage. University

National Museum 2008



Vikki Parsley's display



Duncan Smith and fellow Wiraduri Echo member during the cultural workshop



Didj comp participants: Sisira Govinnage, Dale Elliott, Warren Saunders, Phillip Yubbagurri Brown, Don Skinner, Lewis Langton, Duncan Ott, Sol Sedgmen and Chris Brown



Dhari a Krar workshop – where museum visitors get to make their own 'Dhari a Krar'

of Newcastle professor, John Maynard, author of *Fight for Liberty and Freedom: The Origins of Australian Aboriginal Activism* (2007), and grandson of Fred Maynard, hosted this informal afternoon discussion with other descendants of original political activists: Dianne and Barbara O'Brien, Barbara Nicholson and Susan Ingram. June Barker joined in via phone link for the audience of 70 people in Canberra. The forum is now available as part of the Audio on Demand service on the Museum's website.

The Acton Peninsula came alive on Saturday 12 July when AIATSIS, DEWHA and the National Museum of Australia joined forces to present NAIDOC on the Peninsula. Over 2000 people engaged in the varied activities which included market stalls, bush tucker, art and craft activities, artists' demonstrations and an outdoor concert headlined by Troy Cassar-Daley.

Inside the National Museum, artists sharing their culture with children and families included Larry Brandy, the 2008 ACT Indigenous Person of the Year, ceramicist Janet Fieldhouse, weaver

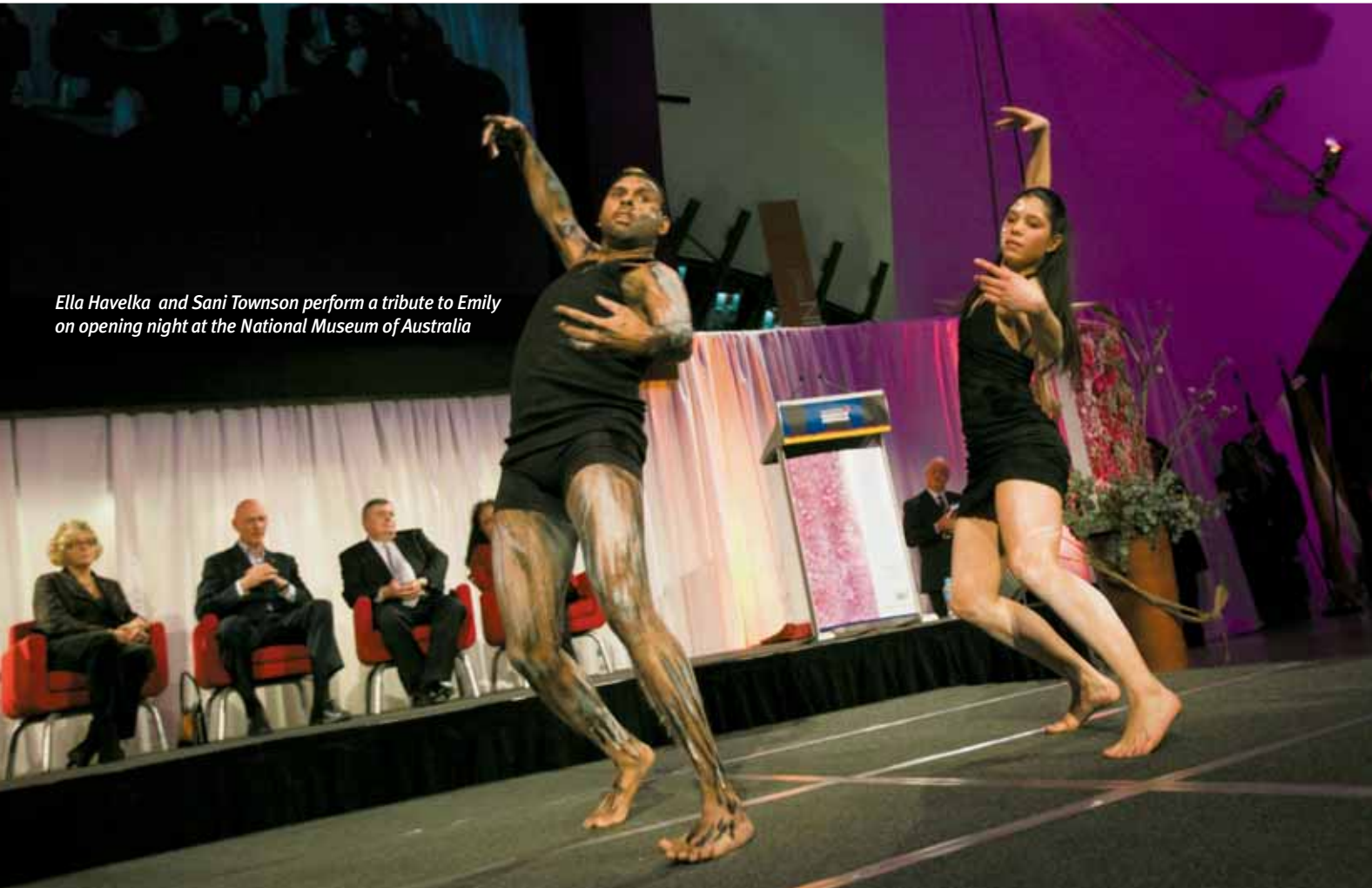
Vikki Parsley, and Warren Saunders who showed everyone not only how to play but also how to make a didgeridoo. Besides enjoying these demonstrations, children made their own masks inspired by the masks and headdresses of the Torres Strait Island in the *Dhari a Krar* workshops.

'I attended NAIDOC on the Peninsula with my toddler today and I just wanted to pass on my congratulations to the organisers and participants. We had a fabulous time. The stalls were interesting with lots of friendly staff, the craft activities were great fun, the entertainers inside were wonderful with children and we really enjoyed the outside concert. A really great day, and I'll be recommending it to all my friends for next year.' A comment from a happy visitor!

Linda McHugh

Coordinator Audience Development and Public Programs

Emily in Canberra



Ella Havelka and Sani Townson perform a tribute to Emily on opening night at the National Museum of Australia



(left to right) Jilpia Jones, Matilda House, the Hon. Peter Garrett and Margo Neale in front of the exhibition

On the evening of Thursday 21 August, some 650 guests assembled in the Hall at the National Museum of Australia for the opening and homecoming of the exhibition *Utopia: The Genius of Emily Kame Kngwarreye* after its triumph in Tokyo. The Hall was awash with the warm desert colours of hot pinks, reds and orange, the tables adorned with a bonsai plant apiece and ikebana floral arrangements that echoed the twin influences of Japan and the Central Australian desert. On the large overhead plasma screen stunning images of Emily, her country and her paintings were shown.

There was a rich line-up of colorful speakers who seemed moved by the spirit of *Emily* and delivered similarly spirited speeches. Ngambri elder, Matilda House, gave a welcome to Country, accompanied by her nephew who used boomerangs to sing Country, the Director, Craddock Morton, spoke of his pride in this major landmark project, its importance to the Museum's international profile and thanked all involved. Janet Holmes à Court, an ardent Emily fan who followed the

exhibition to each venue in Japan, gave an emotive speech straight from the heart, with tears revealing both her attachment to *Emily* and the potency of her work, as well as gratitude and respect to the National Museum of Australia for undertaking such a nationally significant project. Mr Hayashida, the Director of the National Art Center, Tokyo, who represented the Museum's Japanese partners on the night, cut a stately figure and delivered his respectful and warm response to both Emily, and to the great relationship developed with the Museum over the three years of the project, expressing his hope that one day we can work together again.

The Hon. Peter Garrett was so impressed after his tour of *Emily* that he felt compelled to deviate from his notes and also speak from the heart. He gave an emotionally charged response to *Emily's* extraordinary brilliance and the 'shock of the new'. I got a taste of his connection with Emily's work when I took him through the gallery prior to the opening. As he turned every corner and was confronted by yet another vista of stunning works ranging from the sublime to the dramatic, all he could say was, 'Oh my god!' repeatedly. He was so bowled over that he asked if he could bring his sleeping bag and camp in the space overnight sometime. He almost did, as his assistants could not drag him away from the festivities of the night.

Many people remarked on the fabulous spirit of the night, the great food and wine and the stimulating conversations from the cross-section of guests who came from far and wide and across many different sectors. This was not just an art crowd. No doubt the spirit was enhanced by the inspiring dance duet from the ochre-bodied dancers Ella Havelka and Sani Townson. Their dance pieces were selected to reinforce the contemporary expression of our dynamic and ancient culture with roots that extend back hundreds and thousands of generations, in tribute to the nature of Emily's contemporary work with its ancient lineage.

The presence of six members of Emily's community and close relatives from Utopia strengthened that connection between the works and the country and culture it represents. Alan Petyarre, Ronnie Bird, Barbara Weir, Gloria Petyarre, Judy Purvis, and Annie Price were as appreciative of the respect they received as we were of the enormous contribution they, and others from the community, made over the years to the cultural success of this project. They even praised the food as they noshed-up on kangaroo meat, beef and seafood. Usually after such openings, the delicate offerings don't do it for them and it is customary to take the desert mob down town for a big feed of steak. But not this time!

Margo Neale *Principal Advisor (Indigenous) to the Director and Senior Curator*



'Why do those fellas paint like me?'

Forum — *Utopia: The Genius of Emily Kame Kngwarreye*



Indigenous art curator Djon Mundine



Christopher Hodges, Gallery Director of Utopia Art, Sydney, in full flight



Troy Pickwick, Ronnie Bird, Alan Petyare, Barbara Weir, Anna Price, Judy Purvis, Amanda Zervos and Gloria Petyare

Emily spoke words like these when she saw the works of other artists which bore a surface similarity to her own work. It is an ironic reversal of the statements some make about her canvases looking like the work of abstract expressionist artists such as Pollock, De Kooning and Kline — until the National Museum of Australia's recent international showcasing of her work in Japan. It seemed that the only way people could relate to her work was through a Euro-American lens. At the forum held on 22 and 23 August, a number of speakers discussed how the work of a different fleet of artists looked like Emily's canvases, rather than the other way around.

One of the many intriguing aspects of Emily's artistic journey on canvas is that in the last eight years of her life, when she was around her eighties, she developed at least seven definable styles. Unbeknown to her, each of these styles paralleled the phases of western modernism. However unlike western modernism her works come from a very different source with an ancient lineage that stretches back some 40,000 to 60,000 years.

After a welcome to Country and an introduction to the members of the Utopia community the first session entitled 'Who are you calling a modernist?' opened with Professor Tatehata, the initiator of the Emily project, presenting a paper entitled 'The impossible modernist'. He explored the ironies of the title from a different cultural space — an 'outsider' position.

Dr Ian McLean followed with a more 'insider' position. He referred to her work as belonging to Indigenous modernism and argued that it is not a movement unique to Emily but rather a consummation of a long post-contact Aboriginal history. Other speakers in this session included Indigenous art curator Djon Mundine who took the view of a boundary rider challenging many assumptions about Aboriginal art in general under the title 'Late-style modernist or latte modernist'.

The next session entitled 'Placing Emily' included people who knew Emily well and/or were very familiar with her work such as Christopher Hodges, a gallerist who promoted her art throughout her painting career, art critic and writer/publisher Susan McCulloch, academic and curator Dr Sally Butler and historian Professor Ann McGrath whose paper was entitled, 'Emily as located historian: The camel lady narrates a history of discovery without 1788'.

The final session entitled 'You take 'im, this one to the world to see ...' took an internationalist approach. Dr Terry Smith, a Getty scholar and art historian from the University of Pittsburgh, viewed Emily's achievement as an individual artist in relationship to a communal culture, responsive to contemporary conditions. A panel of Japanese professionals associated with the exhibition also gave moving descriptions of responses to the show in Japan.

Margo Neale *Principal Advisor (Indigenous) to the Director and Senior Curator*

Goulburn Sports and Culture EXPO 2008

Over three days from 6 to 8 May 2008, National Museum of Australia Education staff Colleen Fitzgerald, Dawn Spencer, Deborah Frederick, Eris Fleming and Sue Barry attended the Goulburn Schools, Sports and Culture Expo, delivering programs for students from kindergarten to year 6.

Participating schools were drawn from Goulburn and surrounding region and the event was promoted as an opportunity for these students, somewhat disadvantaged by geography and rural issues, to experience cultural and sporting activities to which they would otherwise have limited access.

Each day, six consecutive 30-minute programs were delivered. At the request of the event coordinator, the focus was on Indigenous programs for all age groups. The two programs presented were:

- Adaptations of Aboriginal Australia for years K–2. This program introduced students to the importance of oral stories in Aboriginal culture and particularly to the concept of the Dreaming.
- Tools of the Land for years 3–6. This program introduced students to the tools and technologies Indigenous Australians have made and used over thousands of years.

Approximately 500 students attended 17 sessions and promotional and curriculum support materials were distributed to 30 teachers. The students were enthusiastic, engaged and clearly enjoyed the programs very much. Teachers were delighted to see the Museum's presence at the event and very appreciative of the materials. Many teachers commented on the relative disadvantage of their students and communities and their inability to bring students even the relatively short distance to Canberra.

For Education staff, these were three particularly intensive yet exciting days. It was especially demanding for Deb and Sue who attended on all three days. Poor weather marred an otherwise successful few days with cold conditions, high winds and occasional rain.

In spite of this it was a very valuable and positive opportunity. It enabled us to "test the waters" regarding regional outreach, to experiment with a format that could easily be adapted to the school environment, to examine the value of delivering Museum-based programs without exhibition content and increase the profile of Museum education in the local region. Discussions with the Deputy Principal of Goulburn Primary School suggested that outreach to teachers in rural areas is desperately lacking and that there is definitely a potential audience for professional development.

Reflections by Deb Frederick

We all worked as a team. Having to be innovative, creative and resilient to entertain these students and deliver our Indigenous programs, Tools of the Land and Goonda-Dani-Booloo, a Dreamtime story for the little ones — this is what we do best in the Education section.

Our classroom was in the middle of the paddock and nature was testing our abilities to hold our ground and hack it — gale force freezing icy winds, but then there was sunshine. It was a test to see who could talk the loudest — the wind or the presenters.

We kept our spirits up with lots of laughter, good humour, coffee and hot soup from the flask to keep us grounded.

There was never a day that was boring, all in all I learnt from this experience. The students and teachers thought it was fantastic, our presentation was the best and they want us to come again next year. (I'll go to the school where it's warm).

Reflections by Sue Barry

Despite the often trying weather conditions, windy and freezing cold, it was a fabulous experience. The students loved being outdoors, for them it was an adventure. They moved in groups around the oval participating in activities that ranged from playing chess to wheelchair basketball, from Scottish bagpipes demonstrations to crawling through army camouflage obstacles.

The students thoroughly enjoyed participating in our Indigenous programs; many said it was the highlight of their day. In the Tools of the Land program students were able to handle objects, think about their use and what materials they were made from. Being able to touch the objects and demonstrate their use enabled the students to gain a better understanding of Indigenous tools.

Younger students were captivated by a Dreaming story. They were able to use their imaginations and act out parts of the story. Being outdoors they were able to roam around, 'being' kangaroos or emus.

It was a wonderful experience for all involved and there was a lot of laughter. Students were able to have fun and learn at the same time.

Lyn Beasley *Manager, School Visits*



Eris and Sue



Deb feeling the cold



Deb telling Goonda Dani Booloo

A Different Time

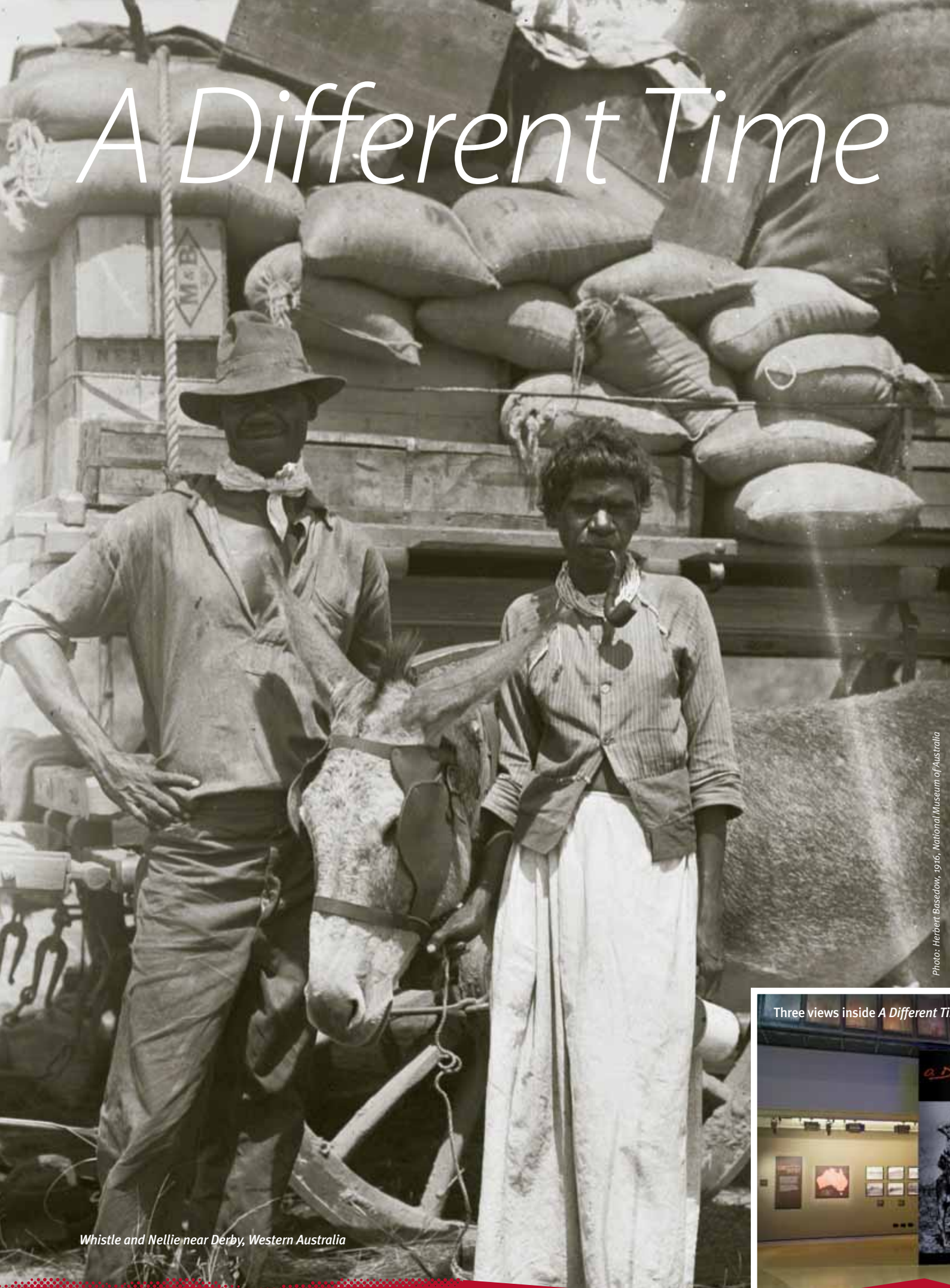
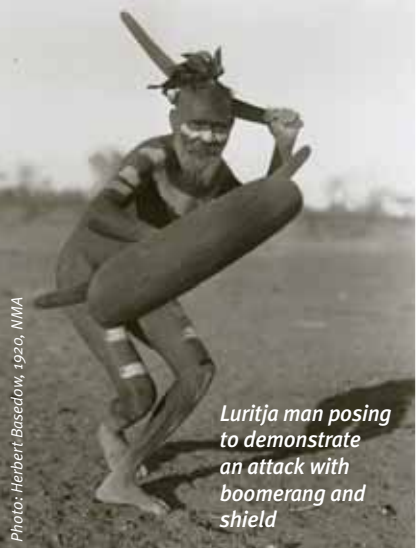


Photo: Herbert Basedow, 1916, National Museum of Australia

Whistle and Nellie near Derby, Western Australia



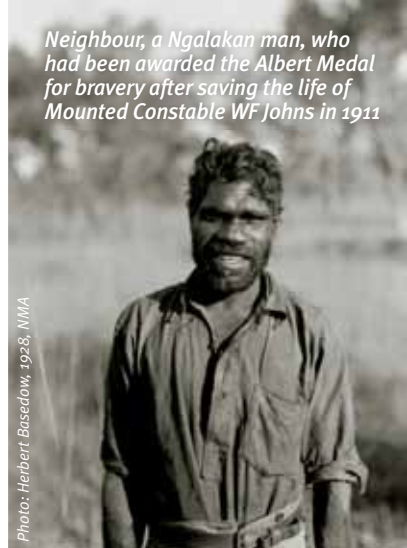
Three views inside A Different Time



Luritja man posing to demonstrate an attack with boomerang and shield



David Kaus, who curated *A Different Time*, in the exhibition



Neighbour, a Ngalkan man, who had been awarded the Albert Medal for bravery after saving the life of Mounted Constable WF Johns in 1911

In the last issue of the News we reported that a new exhibition, *A Different Time: The Expedition Photographs of Herbert Basedow 1903–1928*, would be on show from 11 July until 12 October 2008 in the Gallery of First Australian’s Focus Gallery. It proved to be very popular and we have received nothing but good reports from visitors. A review in the Australian newspaper described *A Different Time* as a ‘landmark’ exhibition.

A Different Time featured 188 photographs taken by Dr Herbert Basedow, a geologist, medical practitioner and anthropologist, in Central and Northern Australia on, as the exhibition title suggests, expeditions between 1903 and 1928. These photographs are part of one of the National Museum’s most significant collections, which comprises over 1000 Aboriginal artefacts collected by Basedow and around 2300 photographs taken by him on these expeditions. Basedow died in 1933 and the following year the federal government purchased his collection for £500. Basedow is an important figure in the history of anthropology in Australia yet outside of those who know a little about the history of Australian anthropology, or geology, few have heard of/or knew much about him, and even fewer known much about him. This exhibition and an accompanying book with the same title should help redress this.

Since Basedow’s death, only a few of his photographs have appeared in exhibitions or publications. *A Different Time* is the first time that an exhibition has been devoted to this great Australian, and where so many of his photographs could be seen at one time. A small selection of Aboriginal artefacts and natural history specimens collected by Basedow were also included.

Sorting through the 2300-plus photographs to make the final selection proved an interesting challenge. I was assisted in this by Edwin Ride, a volunteer who had previous experience working

with historical photographs. We placed copies of all the images we liked on a wall, setting them out in groups according to the way the exhibition would be organised. Once we had a better idea of the number of images that we had to work with, we started culling. With so many wonderful photographs, this was not an easy task. With some parameters to guide us — to ensure Basedow’s work as a scientist, anthropologist and doctor, expedition activities and people and places he encountered were represented — we came up with the selection displayed in the exhibition.

Part of *A Different Time* was devoted to Frank Feast, who accompanied Basedow on four expeditions in the 1920s. Basedow first met Feast in 1919 and the following year, aged just 17, he accompanied Basedow on his first expedition. I interviewed Feast in 1986 when he was in his early 80s and he had a remarkable memory, remembering clearly events that took place six decades earlier. He had been given a camera by two aunts just before he left on the 1920 trip, and on that 1986 visit Feast gave me that camera, the journal he kept on all but the 1920 trip and his surviving negatives for the National Museum’s collection. The camera and journal were included, as well as a basket collected by Feast at Oenpelli in 1928 and loaned by a member of the family. There was also an audiovisual presentation, illustrated by a selection of his photographs, in which Feast recounts events from these expeditions.

It is hoped that *A Different Time* will eventually travel to other venues. In the meantime the Museum’s website has a section on *A Different Time* where you can read about Basedow and his expeditions, see a selection of his photographs and listen to Frank Feast talking about the expeditions he participated in.

David Kaus
Senior curator, ATSIIP



If it wasn't for them ...

Professor John Maynard talks at the forum



One very special event for NAIDOC Week at the Museum made a personal connection between events 70 years ago and more, and people today. We wanted to celebrate the Indigenous protesters of the 1920s and 1930s who, like those before and after them, worked against the injustices suffered by Indigenous Australians. For many people, this era of protest is an unknown story — most associate protests with the 1960s and 1970s.

How to celebrate the protests of that early time? Well, what better way to celebrate than with the family descendants of those remarkable people — and with some of those who were actually there.

Two of these special people were Aunty Esther Carroll and Aunty Olive Campbell who, 70 years ago, were two small girls at the 1938 Day of Mourning, when a group of Aboriginal people held an event to remind their fellow Australians that 26 January 1938 was not a cause of celebration for Indigenous Australians. 2008 marks the 70th anniversary of this event. Family member Suzanne Ingram was also at the Museum to talk with the Aunties about their memories of that day. Aunty Esther raised the question ‘... what would inspire my family to be there? I think they were all political, all motivated in some way but also inspired ... I am very proud — and who wouldn't be proud — to be part of history like this’. Suzanne took the opportunity to rectify an error that has crept in concerning the identification of Aunty Esther and Aunty Olive being the children in the famous Day of Mourning photograph.

We also wanted to remember other activists from that period. Fred Maynard, William Cooper, Jack Patten and Bill Ferguson are well-known for their activism in this time. These and many others, not so well-known, risked the persecution and harassment that protest at that time could bring to those who raised a voice for change.

We also invited Professor John Maynard, Fred's grandson, Aunty Barbara McDonogh and Aunty Diane O'Brien, descendants of both Jack Patten and William Cooper, and Aunty Barbara Nicholson, daughter of Jack Tattersall, one of those lesser-known heroes, to join us that day and talk about their ancestors and how their struggles inspired their lives. Aunty June Barker, Bill Ferguson's granddaughter, joined us by telephone hook-up.

It was very moving to listen to family members talking while images of their ancestors were shown on the screen above. They spoke about their ancestors, their lives and the continuing influence of these heroes on their own lives and the wider community. Aunty June spoke of their courage. ‘I would like to say how brave they must have been back in those days to speak up and stand out against the white Australians’. Aunty Diane reflected about the effect of her great-grandfather on her work ‘It just felt like the spirit is there and is following me through. When I talked about land, health and education it was like him talking. My great-aunties used to say that it's your great-grandfather talking’.

Aunty Barbara Nicholson spoke of those who, like her father, are invisible in history. ‘One of the reasons I agreed to be here today was to put that right, to get his name up there, maybe as a representative of all of those other nameless faces ...’

Professor Maynard closed the occasion with these words, which summed up the feeling of the day.

‘But for me, being descended from my grandfather just gives me such — and we find that here with all the descendants — incredible pride, courage and strength. Everything that I have done and continue to do in my life is the respect that I carry for his memory’.

Dr Jay Arthur Curator, ATSIP



(left to right) Barbara Nicholson, Barbara McDonogh and Diane O'Brien. Behind them can be seen a precious item from the Museum's collection — a banner for the Australian Aborigines League made by Bill Onus



Aunty Esther Carroll and Aunty Olive Campbell

Indigenous rights online

From Mapoon to Wattie Creek to Warburton, the National Museum of Australia's website, *Collaborating for Indigenous Rights 1957–1973*, tells the stories of communities and individuals who made a difference.

The site focuses on the period after the Second World War — a time when Australia was divided into separate worlds.

The vast majority of its people lived in a world of houses serviced with water and power, where laws ensured social order, where people on the whole had jobs to do and enough to eat ... The other world was inhabited by people whose ancestors had lived here for many generations — the Indigenous Australians. By the 1950s most had lost their lands and lived in poverty on the fringes of non-Indigenous society.

But it was also a time when black and white Australians worked together for change. When local issues became national issues, and individuals stood up for the civil rights and land rights of Indigenous Australians.

Some of the campaigns featured on the website are well-known: the 1967 Referendum, the Wave Hill walk-off led by Vincent Lingiari, the defence of Albert Namatjira, the Freedom Ride and the Aboriginal Tent Embassy.

Others may be unfamiliar: the struggle for social service benefits, the campaign against the Queensland Trust Fund, the struggle against mining at Mapoon and the resistance of the Lake Tyers community in Victoria to a proposed government takeover.

More than anything, *Collaborating for Indigenous Rights* is about the people who dedicated their lives to these struggles for justice. There are short biographies of more than 90 individuals — from George Abdullah to Emil and Hannah Witton. Many were interviewed and the site includes memories of their experiences as activists. Joe McGinness recalled that:

'... every payday the women ran a raffle, raised money that way for the [Cairns] Advancement League. Dances, you know, weekly dances ... That raised a bit of fun to keep us goin' through the years, you see, and particularly helped us with our travel, but you know we had to put our own money in too!'

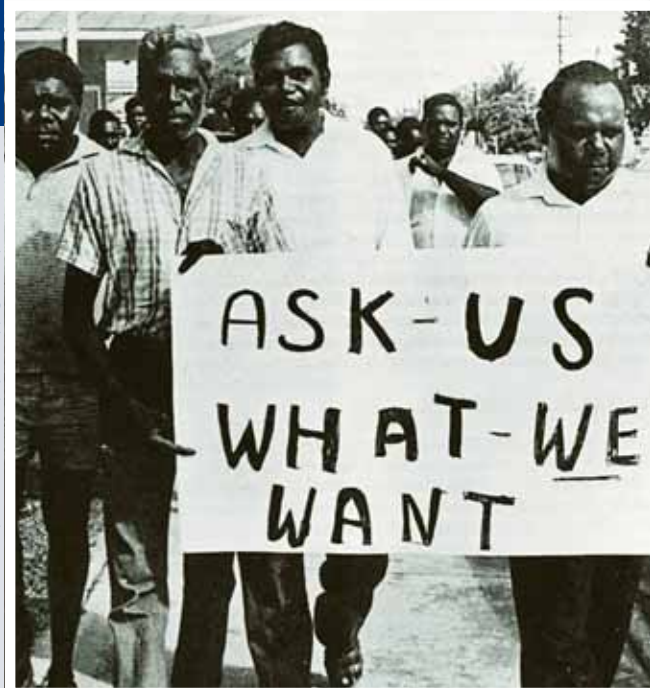
The histories of some 35 organisations are featured, especially the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI). And there are copies of letters, legislation, debates and other documents, as well as resources for teachers and students.

The website was developed by Dr Sue Taffe, Centre for Australian Indigenous Studies, Monash University, with funding from the Australian Research Council and support by the National Museum and other cultural institutions. It complements a touring exhibition on the struggle for Indigenous rights in Australia from the 1920s to the 1960s, due to open in August 2009 at the National Museum.

Check it out. We welcome your feedback — let us know if someone in your family or community was involved — www.indigenousrights.net.au.

Tikka Wilson *Multimedia and Web*

Photo: Northern Territory News, 28 February 1968, copyright Newpix



Tom Thompson, Clancy Roberts and Davis Daniels protest against a proposed Northern Territory law which would grant Aboriginal Territorians the right to lease and later sell Aboriginal Reserve land and in the process lose it

Photo: Bond collection, AIATSIS



Aunt Celia and Granny Monsell campaigning in Brisbane for a Yes vote during the 1967 Referendum campaign

Photo: Courtesy Ian Spalding



Pastor Doug Nicholls, Eric Onus, Laurie Moffat and Joe McGinness lead 40 Aboriginal men and women protesting in 1963 against the government's plans to close Lake Tyers

Visiting Woorabinda

Photos: Barbara Paulson

Geraldine 'Lena' Barber and Theresa King at the Undoonoo Childcare Centre



In June, Jay Arthur and I visited Woorabinda and met with several community members to discuss representing their community in the Museum. We went with the aim of listening to how they would like to be represented at a national level. We asked what stories and objects they felt would best tell Woorabinda's history and people's experiences during the reserve days before, and leading up to, Woorabinda becoming the township it is today.

Woorabinda was established as an Aboriginal Reserve Settlement in 1927. In some ways, the story of Woorabinda is similar to stories of other missions and reserves set up around Australia during that period, in that it tells the history of Aboriginal people being 'rounded-up' and put under government control, where every aspect of their lives was overseen and dictated by government officials. Yet, there are so many stories and experiences that were and are unique to Woorabinda. Stories of events and decisions made during day-to-day living, which led to the development of Woorabinda as a town with its own unique character; a character reflected proudly in the hearts and actions of the people who call it 'home'.

Community members became storytellers and shared their knowledge, historical perspectives and personal expressions of what their town and community meant to them. Some members spoke 'off the record' and some were happy to be 'on the record', each contributing generously their time, stories and anecdotes — all of which were insightful and intriguing. Each spoke with quiet reverence about their living experiences, their community's collective achievements and endeavours, as well as personal visions for the future of their community.

We listened to their stories about the challenges experienced living on a reserve under government control. They also spoke about getting out from under government control and of what consequences it brought to individuals and families. There were stories that related just how effecting, and disconnecting, the policy and practice of control of the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was to individuals, families, communities and to cultures.

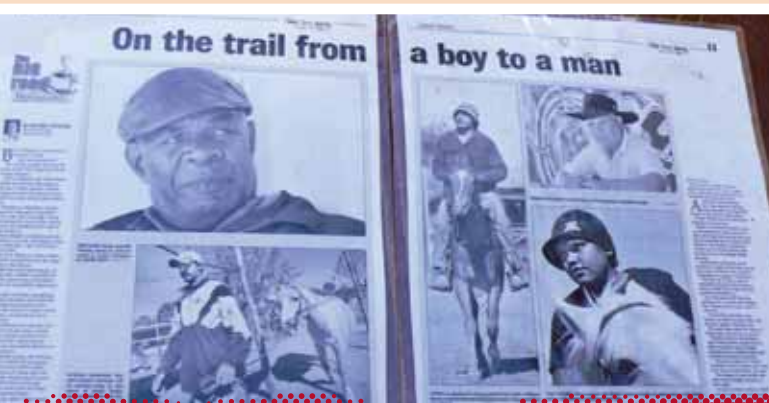
One of the contributors spoke with a real sense of achievement about how some cultural expression and knowledge was still practised out of sight of the Supervisor and any of his informants. Another spoke of the sadness and regret she feels over the loss of language and cultural knowledge she knew her parents held but weren't allowed to share with her or her siblings.

Several also spoke of the challenges in living on a reserve with 52 different cultural groups represented. Groups from all across Queensland were brought to live at Woorabinda, each with a different language, cultural protocols and living practices. There is real

Jay with Campbell Leisha and some of the young men participating in the stockmen training program



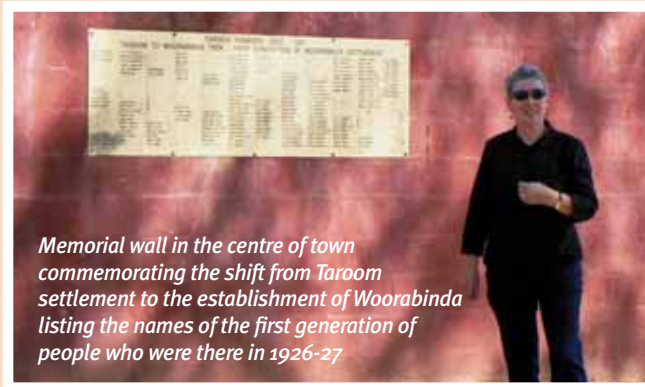
News articles about the stockman's project



One of the signs on the road to Woorabinda



Wally Saunders with his granddaughter and the clapsticks that were given to him by the primary school for his contribution



Memorial wall in the centre of town commemorating the shift from Taroom settlement to the establishment of Woorabinda listing the names of the first generation of people who were there in 1926-27

communal pride in the knowledge that those challenges were dealt with mostly among themselves with respectful consideration of the fact that they were 'all in the same boat'. Also, it was a surprise to find out that each of the 52 cultural groups was given its own space/section on the reserve and that, upon arrival, any newcomer to the reserve was asked which cultural group they belonged to. They were then directed to their 'people' to be looked after and consequently guided as to how the reserve ran on a day-to-day basis. This is something that wasn't commonly practised on missions and reserves across Australia.

This is an ongoing project and we look forward to sharing news of it as we further develop the exhibit. There will be more about the stories shared by individuals in the next issue of this magazine.

Barbara Paulson Curator, ATSIP

Rose and Bill Thaiday at BRACS (Wooribinda's Radio station)



Aunty Edna Ally with the horseshoe her father gave her

Uncle Tim Kemp with his stockman's quart pot that he travelled with most of his working life



Marie Kemp, Kim Dale and Pat Leisha from Nghally Gungalu



IndigiGlass '08: Postcards from the Referendum

Artists creating works at the Canberra Glassworks



In 2007, Australia celebrated the 40th anniversary of the 1967 Referendum at which Australians voted overwhelmingly to amend the Constitution in order to provide greater rights to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The National Museum of Australia was proud to be able to commemorate this historic event with an exhibition and through a companion website.

And so when, in early 2008, the National Museum was invited by the Canberra-based Tuggeranong Arts Centre to participate in the *IndigiGlass '08: Postcards from the Referendum* project, it welcomed the opportunity.

The project itself involved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, Jenni Kemarre Martiniello, Lyndy Delian, Renee Smith, and Belinda McDowell, creating a collection of works in glass based upon their memories and experiences at the time of the 1967 Referendum. The project was supported by the Tuggeranong Arts Centre, the National Museum of Australia, the Australia Council for the Arts, the ACT Government, the National Archives of Australia and the Canberra Glassworks. The works have been exhibited at the Tuggeranong Arts Centre and, at the end of the exhibition, were transferred to the National Museum of Australia.

It may be asked why is the National Museum acquiring contemporary artworks? After all, it is a history museum, not an art gallery. In response it must be remembered that such contemporary works serve as reminders that history is ongoing and the events of the past continue to affect the lives of people in the present. The artists' lives have all been strongly affected in some way by events leading to, and after, the referendum. They choose to express these experiences through their works in glass. Each work has a story to tell.

The stories accompany the works as part of the Museum's collection. As Jenni observes in the accompanying exhibition catalogue:

'In this collection we honour those voices, those words and deeds belonging to our families, communities, our resistance heroes. We fought hard for the outcomes of the 1967 Referendum, to be recognised as citizens of our own land ... The descriptions of the works in the collection explain the many layers of meaning embedded in each.'

In our role as curators we look for certain attributes in objects, both in existing collections and when acquiring new objects. We seek narratives. The object, be it two- or three-dimensional, has to act as a mediator for stories if it is to have a place in a museum. The object serves as an icon, encapsulating many meanings and many potential stories. The audience is to be encouraged to look beyond the aesthetic attributes of the work or object, to look for the sacred and secular histories and events that are communicated through it.

The Museum is attempting to change the limited perception that objects must be old to be interesting. In acquiring these works we are attempting to illustrate that significant stories are communicated through new objects and through new, unexpected, sometimes unconventional, media. Such works act as icons for the continued assertion of a living individual and corporate Indigenous identity.

The works that have been created through the *IndigiGlass '08* project tell stories of history, of personal experiences, and of events that shaped the lives of individuals and of society. They remind us that the artefact does not, in itself, make history — history, sacred and secular, is made, experienced, and told by people.

Michael Pickering Director, ATSIP

Learning about the collections

There are new Indigenous Hosts now working in the National Museum. Their job is all about customer service and understanding how to effectively communicate with the diversity of people who visit the Museum. Hosts are the face of the Museum. Their role is to positively enhance the visitor experience and share with visitors stories about the exhibits and objects from our National Historical Collection. They become part of the visitor experience.

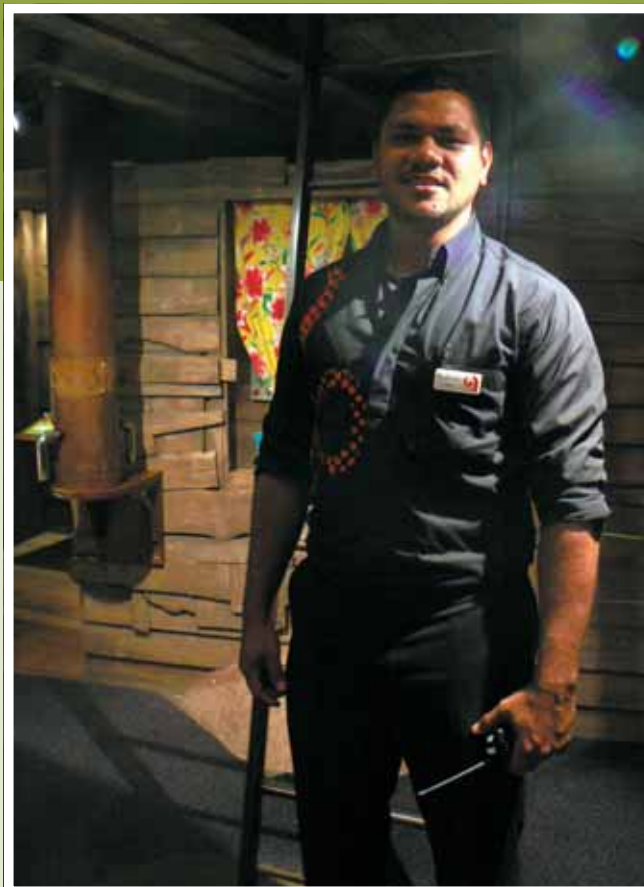
Kristy Smith and Rodayne Tanna are two new Indigenous Hosts and part of their learning includes becoming familiar with exhibits and objects that are in the collection. Trevor Reid is a veteran Host who participates as a role model and guide as to how to handle some of the finer points associated with being a Host.

Kristy Smith: It is wonderful working in the Museum because it focuses on cultural or cross-cultural knowledge sharing and I get to learn about other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures from all around Australia. I know my mob's history but I don't know everyone else's. I'm pleased to be working here and having the opportunity to learn about all the cultures and histories that make up our great country.

Rodayne Tanna: Walking into Open Collections is a beautiful experience for me, from the time you open the door, there is this aura in the room. It is where objects from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities from all over Australia are collectively displayed. Most objects are old, but some are contemporary. All objects hold the knowledge and history of all the different Indigenous nations around Australia. When I walk into Open Collections I talk to the object and let them know that I am there. When I talk to visitors about some of the artefacts I can show them how they were used and give a greater understanding of the stories and knowledge that the objects represent.



Kristy talks about her impressions of Open Collections



Rodayne Tanna in front of the children's 'cubby'

Some visitors just want to engage with another person over stories and objects that represent Australian history. Some want to engage in political debate particularly over the Aboriginal stories. But I'm not here to debate people and their personal opinions. I'm here to share all the stories that explore the social history of our nation. I particularly focus on sharing my knowledge, culture and experience with people.

Trevor Reid: I'm sharing my knowledge of culture and history as an Australian. I love conducting the tours. It gives me a chance to share my pride and passion in Australian history and knowledge of people and events that have shaped the kind of nation we have become. I like explaining the science and knowledge behind the artefact, such as applying modern science principles to artefacts like the boomerang. I explain to visitors the similarity between the grooves seen in boomerangs and the dimples in golf balls: both features are examples of aerodynamics used to extend flight. This gives the visitors something to think about and to reflect on how Indigenous people were using scientific principles long before the First Fleet arrived.

I conducted a tour for a group of students aged 7–8 years old. I had been talking about Aboriginal culture and used the term 'their culture' and she called from the middle of the group and said 'our culture'. I asked her if she was Indigenous and she replied 'No, but this is part of our culture as Australians'. It is nice to know the next generation is thinking that Aboriginal culture and history is inclusive in Australia's heritage. That this next generation is bringing them both together is a positive indication for the future of our nation.

Contact the Booking team to arrange for the Living Cultures Tour on (02) 6208 5021 or email BookingTeam@nma.gov.au. See the Museum website for more information.

ATSIP NEWS

All articles and photos by Barbara Paulson unless otherwise stated

Link-Up caseworkers



Link-Up caseworkers visit display

The Link-Up exhibit in the Gallery of First Australians has been very popular, especially this year — since the apology by the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd. Visitors to the Museum are able to see some of the personal stories and learn about different experiences of members of the Stolen Generations. They can also learn about Link-Up itself, and how such a grassroots organisation played a pivotal role in the lives of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities by helping members of the Stolen Generations to find their families. Link-Up caseworkers visited the Museum recently and were amazed at how each of the stories is told and how issues related to wider non-Indigenous communities we represented. As one caseworker stated ‘awareness and education even in the wider community make our job that much easier’. The caseworkers were in Canberra working with the Family History Unit at AIATSIS, which specifically assists Link-Up case workers in tracing families, family history research and coordinating reunions.

Women leading by example

Sharon Condren, together with some of the participants from this year’s Indigenous Women’s Leadership Program — which was held here in Canberra by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) — toured the Museum with a particular focus on the Gallery of First Australians (GFA). As part of the program, women from all over Australia converged on Canberra to discuss issues identified by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women as priorities in their communities and to workshop ways more women can undertake leadership, representative, and management roles within their community. A tour of the GFA was offered as part of the group’s experience of Canberra and through the tour the women could see how other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and leaders are represented in a social history context within exhibits of objects and stories. Some stories represented in the Museum underline similar issues being discussed. It was also a great opportunity for the women to see some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural material they had not seen before, or for a very long time.



Women from the leadership program



Jon and Caleb Juda inside the GFA

Living history

Jon and Caleb Juda roamed among the Gallery of First Australians playing the didgeridu for visitors lucky enough to be in the gallery. As part of the Museum’s public programs, a didgeridu player is invited to perform as to a way of engaging visitors in the living history and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The performances extend the visitors’ experience at the Museum. Both John and Caleb are celebrated didgeridu players having won Best Player, Senior and Junior, respectively, at both the 2006 and 2007 Annual Didj Comp held here at the Museum during NAIDOC Week.

ReCoil: Change and Exchange in Coiled Fibre Art

Basket, 2007, by Phyliss Rogers

Photo: Courtesy Martumilli Artists



The innovations occurring in Indigenous fibre practice are nothing short of revolutionary! This new exhibition opened at the Museum in November. *ReCoil: Change and Exchange in Coiled Fibre Art* explores the coiled basketry technique and the way that it has spread from south-east Australia and diversified, establishing new fibre movements in a range of remote Aboriginal communities.

The exhibition, curated by Margie West with Indigenous mentoree Karen Mills, includes stunning work from 15 fibre workers from Western Australia, New South Wales, South Australia and the Northern Territory.

This basketry technique was traditionally practised by Aboriginal people of south-east Australia, and was introduced to Arnhem Land by missionaries in the early 1900s. Since then, the technique has spread to desert and western areas and has been used in myriad ways, adapted to suit regional materials and characteristics and personal styles. The show is filled with delightful use of form and colour and traces the creative results of years of 'change and exchange' in weaving.

Andy Greenslade Curator, ATSIIP

William Barton and The Song Company perform at the Museum

On Monday 23 February 2009 Australia's leading vocal ensemble, The Song Company, will perform a remarkable program at the Museum called Kulkadunga Man featuring guest artist William Barton, the world famous didjeridu player. Kulkadunga Man will be a sonic and visual experience of the Australian night and day as seen through the eyes of William Barton, a man of the Kulkadunga people (Mt Isa, Queensland), using finely detailed large scale photography by Allan Chawner, commissioned by the Song Company. Allan Chawner's montage of hundreds of photographs will be projected on the giant screen in the Hall accompanying the singers and William Barton playing the didjeridu. The program features works by composers from the thirteenth century to the present day including Ross Edwards' Southern Cross Chants and William's own works and improvisations.

Call the Song Company on (02) 8272 9500 to book seats or obtain their 2009 brochure, or visit their website for more details at www.songcompany.com.au.

Gabrielle Hyslop Manager, Public Programs and Events



William Barton on home ground

Photo: Allan Chawner



Civil rights stories: Bowraville, New South Wales

In September last year, two members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program together with a Museum photographer visited Bowraville to record stories about segregation in the local theatre. The success of this visit was due to the hospitality shown by Martin Ballanggarr, a Gumbaynggirr elder from the Bowraville community and a councillor on the Nambucca Shire Council. Martin shared his memories of the theatre, including the segregation that was in place until its closure in 1966. To assist in telling these stories the Museum has acquired, with the valuable assistance of Lisa Milner, two sets of seats from the old Ray-Mond Theatre in Bowraville that will be used in the travelling exhibition *From Little Things Big Things Grow* scheduled to open in late 2009.

Kipley Nink Assistant Curator, ATSIIP

(back) Bob Lehane, (front left to right) Troy Pickwick, Martin Ballanggarr, Kipley Nink and Lisa Milner at the Bowraville Theatre

Neville Bonner collection



Objects in the Neville Bonner collection date and originate from various periods in his life and career. They were selected and gathered as a representative collection for donation by his wife, Heather Bonner. As both Neville Bonner's wife and political secretary for many years, the selection of items by Mrs Bonner can be viewed as important to the preservation of Neville Bonner's story and as a fitting tribute to his life achievements.

Bonner was the first Aboriginal person to sit as a senator in federal parliament. Many of the items in the collection refer to his years in the Senate, from 1971 to 1983. A framed political cartoon, a personal note from Prime Minister McMahon, a certificate from the Senate of the State of Hawaii and a photograph of Bonner throwing boomerangs in the Senate gardens in August 1971 illustrate the varied and dedicated nature of his public life. Several photographic portraits, shaving items and gold-rimmed spectacles focus on his public appearance and the way in which he was viewed and remembered by the community. Other objects within the collection include Bonner's Order of Australia medal, Men's Reconciliation plaque, and doctorate robes which relate the extent and public recognition of his achievements. His golf glove and tee, and boomerangs, draw attention to his personal interests.

Bonner was respected during his term in politics by both sides of parliament, and by Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. As an elder of the Jagera people, Bonner sought to preserve many aspects of his culture and sought to make the wider Australian community aware of the social and political struggles of the Aboriginal people. Many of the items in the collection reflect the dual nature of his community role and the successes and struggles of position. The collection conveys the personal and public struggle Bonner experienced in his efforts for adaptation and reconciliation. The collection gives insight into the character and career of Neville Bonner.

Jennifer Wilson *Curator, Gallery Development*



Feathered ornament used at the 75th anniversary of the Coniston Massacre, 2003

Coniston commemoration collection

In September 2003, a commemoration was held at Yurrukuru (Brooks Soak) to mark the 75th Anniversary of the Coniston Massacre in Central Australia. Traditional ceremonies were staged by women from the communities of Willowra and Yuendumu. Ceremonial objects made for the performance now form part of the Museum's National Historical Collection. They include this feathered head ornament made from chicken feathers and wool.

The events which became known as the Coniston Massacre were a reprisal for the murder of a white man, Fred Brooks, by a Warlpiri man on Coniston Station in August 1928. More than 60 Aboriginal men, women and children were killed in the aftermath.

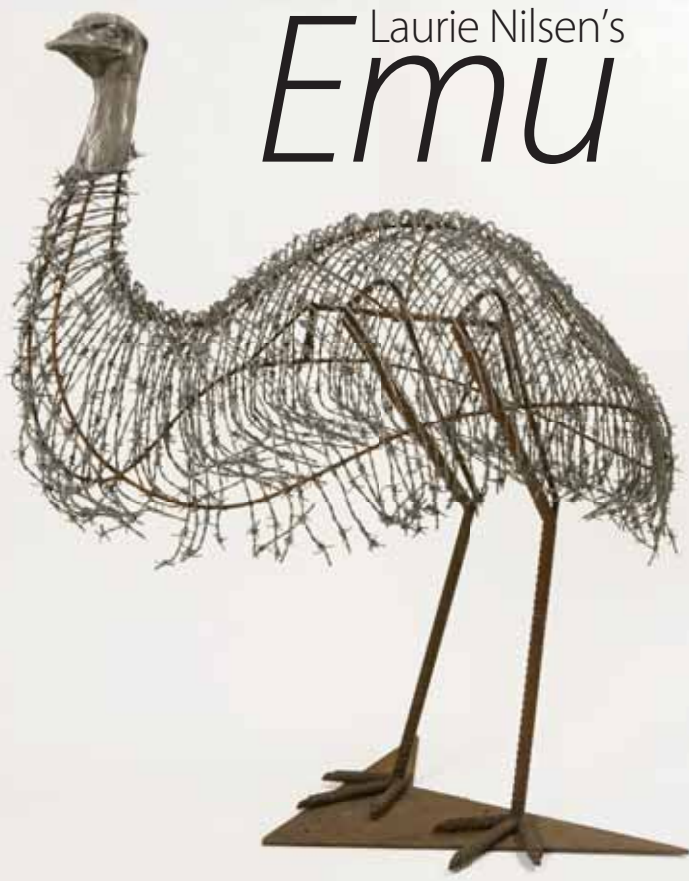
The 2003 Commemoration was also a significant event in the history of the nation. This occasion represented the first gathering of people alive at the time of massacre to commemorate the events. It also provided an opportunity for Aboriginal communities to reflect on the meaning of the event and to mourn those who were killed.

As well as the traditional ceremony, a Christian service and a rock concert were held for an audience of several hundred people. The event was attended by the Warlpiri communities of Willowra, Yuendumu and Alice Springs, by representatives of the Northern Territory Police and also descendants of the family of Mounted Constable George Murray, the man who led the massacre.

The theme of the event, as publicised by the Central Land Council who organised the proceedings, was 'Making Peace With the Past'. For many Aboriginal people today, the events of 1928 are as relevant in the present time, and this commemoration was about forging new relationships and seeing old ones in a new light.

The Coniston commemoration collection consists of ceremonial objects and ornaments and a large banner hung as a backdrop throughout the proceedings. The objects were made by senior Warlpiri women. The commemorative banner was made by artists from the Willowra Community. 2008 marked the 80th anniversary of the Coniston Massacre.

Peter Thorley *Curator, ATSIIP*



Laurie Nilsen's
Emu

Peta Edwards
Can you Imagine? (Mum's Story)



Peta Edwards and Mike Pickering
with work at ArtExpress

Emu (2003) were acquired by the Museum in 2005 as part of a targeting collecting program to represent the histories and stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from urban areas. As with most urban Indigenous works, there are several stories being highlighted in these works. There are the story of how native animals were/are fenced in and removed from their land, traditional lifestyles paralleling with the stories of Aboriginal peoples removal from homelands. The work also demonstrates a continuation of the representation of the emu as an important totem.

Laurie Nilsen produced this barbed wire sculpture in 2003. *Emu* is a metaphor for the impact of introduced boundaries on Indigenous people and fauna, and is the artist's personal response to the 'fencing off' of his traditional lands and the impact of those newly established boundaries on the environment.

Emu also tells as an important story of colonisation, personalising in sculpture the social and psychological effects on Indigenous peoples who remained on their traditional lands when new boundaries and barriers were established leaving them marginalised. The barbed wire denotes changes, struggles and challenges Indigenous people faced over the last two centuries in their adaptation and development of Indigenous cultures.

As with many of Nilsen's works, this sculpture is a political piece. Nilsen is a political commentator who uses the subject and materials to discuss how regions have been fenced off, creating barricades which affected not only the traditional custodians but also the native animals whose migratory paths and travel routes were, and still are, severely compromised. Barbed wire is an international symbol for 'keep out' and 'keep off'. While working as a station hand, Laurie Nilsen often came across emus entangled, dead or dying, in wire fences. As Nilsen states '... simple structures like [barbed wire fences] can wreak so much change in the lifestyle of a people whose boundaries certainly weren't made in wire'. (Laurie Nilsen, 1994). *Emu* is currently on display at the entrance to the Gallery of First Australians.

Barbara Paulson Curator, ASTIP

Lithgow is clearly a haven for talented young artists with more than 30 of the local high school students being represented in ARTEXPRESS, an annual exhibition of works created by New South Wales students for their Higher School Certificate Visual Arts examination, over the last 11 years.

Peta Edwards painted *Can you Imagine? (Mum's Story)* for her Year 12 visual arts major work at Lithgow High School in 2000. Through her painting, Peta depicts the story of her mother Diane, a member of the Stolen Generations, 'This work is for her, for the hundreds of Indigenous Australians who share her pain', the artist told the *Lithgow Mercury*.

The large painting was exhibited at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and regional tour venues as part of ARTEXPRESS in 2001 and has since had pride of place in the school foyer. The painting was recently acquired by the National Museum of Australia where it will help tell Diane's story to a broad national and international audience.

Michael Pickering, Director of the National Museum's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program travelled to Lithgow in July to formally accept the new acquisition.

As a curator at a social history museum, Michael said that he's always interested in objects that go beyond the aesthetics and communicate an important story. 'This work is a combination of art, life and story working so richly together', he said.

'The events represented in Peta's work are the experiences that shaped our history — the legacy of the Stolen Generations. Works such as Peta's tell stories of history, of personal experiences, and of events that shaped the lives of individuals and of society. They remind us that the artefact does not, in itself, make history — history, sacred and secular, is made, experienced, and told by people', Michael said.

Caroline Vero Publicist

Next issue highlights

- *ReCoil* travelling exhibition
- Staff travel to Bowraville
- The civil rights exhibition *From Little Things Big Things Grow*
- Canning Stock Route exhibition and projects
- More objects from our National Historical Collection
- Updates on new and continuing projects.

Meet some more of our **Mates** in the next issue due out in April 2009.



Jack Horner's address book (featured in From Little Things Big Things Grow exhibition)

Inside Out of the Desert: Papunya Painting exhibition. Trial by Fire (1975) By Tim Leura Tjapaltjari



Flake and Core Sequence, 2000, by Kim Ackerman. Part of the stone tools exhibit



View from the upper Gallery of First Australians



**NATIONAL
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CANBERRA**

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

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