

# Goree

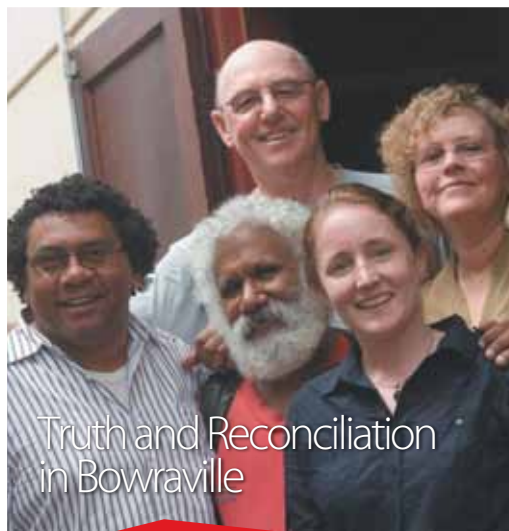
ABORIGINAL &  
TORRES STRAIT  
ISLANDER

# news

FROM THE NATIONAL  
MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA



Selling Yarns 2  
extravaganza



Truth and Reconciliation  
in Bowraville



Sharing  
Personal  
Histories



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## Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander News

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## Cover photos

**Main:** Ronald Simpson, Lynton Robbins and Nicholas Robbins at the launch of their grandfather's exhibit

**Bottom Left:** Selling Yarns 2 extravaganza  
Photo: Jason McCarthy

**Bottom middle:** (back) Bob Lehane, (front left to right) Troy Pickwick, Martin Ballangarry, Kipley Nink and Lisa Milner at the Bowraville Theatre

**Bottom right:** Mary Terszak sharing her personal histories

## Gallery photos (these pages)

**Left:** Inside the Selling Yarns 2 conference at the Museum  
Photo: Jason McCarthy

**Middle:** Rights module in lower GFA

**Right:** A section of the 'We're here' module representing the Tasmanian Aboriginal community

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## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA



Welcome. I'd like to acknowledge the Ngambri and Ngunnawal people of the Australian Capital Territory as well as all the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples whose stories we present through our exhibitions and activities.

Over the past several months the Museum has made some considerable achievements. In particular, the acquisition of some major collections of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art works and cultural objects. These include a collection of objects from south-eastern Australia, early works from Papunya, and the Canning Stock Route project art collection. A steady stream of individual objects has also been added to the Museum's collection— such as the illuminated Barak Address, the Burke and Wills breastplate, and Frank Hardy's pipe. The stories behind some of these objects are told in this issue.

These objects and collections are destined for major research and exhibition projects that will convey important stories of Australian Indigenous cultures and histories to the Australian public.

It is particularly pleasing to see Museum audiences seeking more and more information about the histories and cultures of the First Australians. The Museum's galleries and exhibitions are not just places to walk through and gaze at the wonderful objects, but also places to find information and answers. Similarly our website is seeing increased use, reflecting the delivery of high quality information to an enquiring public.

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

**Craddock Morton**

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



Welcome to the eleventh issue of the Museum's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander News. As is customary I would also like to acknowledge the Ngambri and Ngunnawal custodians of the area and the many other Indigenous people who have made Canberra and region their home. There are some 4000 of us in the Australian Capital Territory alone representing 1.2 per cent of the Territory's population.

The Museum has a higher representation of Indigenous people working here. At approximately 5 per cent, we exceed the Australian Public Service figure of 2.1 per cent which is a reflection of our commitment to Indigenous history and culture and to our belief that Indigenous people should be well represented in the delivery of such material. It is promising to note that the proportion of Indigenous ongoing employees is on the increase. However, it is an area that requires ongoing vigilance and proactivity and we have a deadly team here who are onto it. The Visitor Services team supported by Employee Relations and People Development deserve special mention for their efforts.

One of the Museum's key priorities of 2009–10 is reviewing its diversity plan. We are looking at building on significant gains in the current diversity plan, such as the Indigenous cadetships, the recruitment of Indigenous trainee hosts, Indigenous cultural awareness training for all staff and the roll out of cultural competency training for individuals and the organisation.

So to all you Indigenous brothers and sisters out there interested in this kind of work — come and check us out!

**Margo Neale**

## MESSAGE FROM THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PROGRAM DIRECTOR



Hello again 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.

Already this year we have had a Hall display on the first anniversary of the Apology to the Stolen Generations, and the launch of the Resistance exhibit in the permanent gallery. Resistance presents four different stories of Indigenous responses to colonial occupation, all characterised by their strength of character as much as by armed conflict. The enduring legacy of such resistance on today's descendants of those involved is evident, reminding us that the events of history continue to affect the lives of real people. Check out the Museum's website for more information.

A lot of the work done by ATSIP staff remains 'behind the scenes', rarely publicised but nonetheless extremely important to the Museum's role. In this regard I would like to congratulate ATSIP curator Andy Greenslade who, together with other Museum staff Patrick Baum, Julie Collett, Gabrielle Considine, Matthew Doney, Claire Owen, Karen Peterson, Alison Spence and Sarah Streatfield, received an 'Australia Day Achievement Medallion' for her work on the processing of the 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Aboriginal Art Collection' gifted to the Museum by the government in 2007.

The coming year looks like being a busy one for the ATSIP team. This year will see the opening of *From Little Things Big Things Grow*, a travelling exhibition on the history of civil rights activism in Australia. We also have new exhibitions on the drawing board that will require extensive research and consultation. We will also continue to engage with communities to provide advice and assistance with regard to management of their own community collections.

Of course, nothing would be possible without the commitment of not only the ATSIP team, but also of all Museum staff. To all our supporters and partners we extend a heartfelt thanks.

**Dr Michael Pickering**

Alison Page speaks at the Selling Yarns 2 conference



Rights module in lower GFA



A section of the 'We're here' module representing the Tasmanian Aboriginal community





# Meet some of our Mates



Eric Bell

>> Hi, I am Eric Bell and I'm from Yass. I work at Ngunnawal Aboriginal Corporation as a care coordinator looking after our Aboriginal elderly and young disabled people who require special care or just need that extra assistance. I have worked in this area for 10 years. One of the community projects I worked on last year was the Munnagal Yerribi (Come let's walk). Buranya Aboriginal Corporation, of which I am chairperson, coordinated the clean-up of an old track by the Yass river that Aboriginal people used to use a lot. They used to walk into town via this old track. We cleaned up the track so everyone could continue to walk there for recreation, and we officially named it Munnagal Yerribi in August 2008. This project was part of the Yass river restoration funded by Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority.

I am currently contributing some of my stories about the Hollywood mission to the *From Little Things Big Things Grow* exhibition being developed by the Museum. I'm proud to be able to tell the story of Hollywood mission. It needs to be told. The area where the mission was has changed now and there are no landmarks or visual indicators that an Aboriginal mission was ever there. It's all private homes now with new landscaping. If you never lived in Hollywood mission and didn't have those memories of living there you would never know where the site was because the area has changed so much.

>> Hi, my name is Karolina Kilian and I am currently working as an assistant curator in the ATSIP team at the Museum. Before joining ATSIP at the beginning of 2009, I worked with the Museum's Registration team — a position in which I was able to work directly with many extraordinary Indigenous collection objects. I am also a Masters student, writing my thesis about how different government organisations use Australia's cultural material for the purposes of international cultural diplomacy. I am particularly focusing on the cultural material of Australian's Indigenous peoples and the impact that these government-driven initiatives have on the communities whose cultural material is utilised.

My time at ATSIP has so far been centred on developing a temporary, travelling exhibition that will explore the history of the activists and events behind the struggle for Indigenous rights in Australia. Within this project, I have been put in charge of sourcing the images and documents that will feature in the exhibition, as well as helping out in many other aspects of exhibition development. Finding out about the momentous events and passionate people behind the fight for Indigenous rights has been absolutely fascinating, and I feel honoured to be working on such an important and inspiring exhibition.

>> Hello. My name is Maria Nugent. I'm a research fellow in the Museum's Centre for Historical Research. Before I came to the Museum about a year ago, I worked at Monash University in Melbourne. And before that, I was based in Sydney, where I was involved in history projects with the communities at La Perouse in Sydney, and Taree and Forster on the New South Wales mid-north coast. Through that experience, I became interested in the historical stories that Aboriginal people tell. And so most of my research is about the ways in which the past is interpreted, narrated and remembered. I've just published a book called *Captain Cook Was Here*, which looks at the stories that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people have told from the early 1800s onwards about Cook's interactions with the local people he met. Now I'm working on a project called 'Remembering Dispossession' about various historical practices Aboriginal people have used to relate and explain their experiences of colonisation in south-eastern Australia. The Museum is a great place for thinking and writing about the different ways that people make histories. That's what we're all involved in, one way or another, as we collect, interpret, research, write, and exhibit. Being here inspires me to learn about how Aboriginal people have gone about their own history-making in the past.

>> My name is Maryann Yettica-Paulson. I am a jewellery artist based in Melbourne. Born in Samoa, I grew up in Auckland, Aotearoa, New Zealand before moving to Australia in 1989. Last November, I set up a jewellery business named Mana Couture, which is a collection of handmade body adornment pieces that uses materials found in Samoa and across the South Pacific including Australia. I came to the National Museum of Australia to attend the Selling Yarns 2 Conference. I met and reconnected with some amazing women and I also saw some beautiful and powerful work. The highlight of the event for me was learning how to weave from my Mapuru mother, Joslyn Malngumba. Women and men from across Australia and New Zealand spoke about their work, motivation and communities that they love and of the ancient creative ways we contribute to issues of environmental justice, sustainability, leadership and cultural pride and expression. I didn't realise how much I yearned for this conversation. My favourite parts of the Museum are the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander section and the collection of South Pacific pieces. I love the amount of space that is dedicated to telling the stories of the diverse Indigenous communities that belong to this land.



Maryann Yettica-Paulson



Left: Paul House

Right: Paul House as baby with the old Canberra hospital in background, 1970

This magazine previously known as *Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander News* from the Museum now has a new name — **Goree**, which means bogong moth. The name was chosen because it relates to the history of Acton, where the Museum is located. Both the site and Goree are significant to the Ngambri of Canberra. 'Goree' is a Walgalu language word from the Ngambri nation. The Museum would like to thank Paul House for suggesting the name for this publication and the local communities of Canberra for their continued support and engagement with the Museum. (Editor)

The site on which the National Museum of Australia is located has an accumulated history. Historically this site, now known as Acton, was one that celebrated the sharing of culture, heritage and resources. In contemporary times the site has become a place which does something similar within a museum context.

This site was a significant Ngambri ceremonial ground. It was a gathering site that is still a part of the songlines that connect with Mt Goree, Uriarra, Byalgeee (Pialligo) and Jerrabomberra then down to Jullergung (Queanbeyan River) to tell the story of goree — the moth. Many Ngambri ceremonies were held at this site but the goree ceremonies, in particular, were a significant annual event and neighbouring groups and people were invited, through lore and customs, to participate during the goree season to feast, celebrate and share company and culture. Friends and foe would gather and put aside differences to celebrate the season. (The site is also significant because it is the place where differences were discussed and resolved — or not.)

## Goree: New name reflects history of site



Image courtesy House family

In 1821, JJ Moore, one of the first colonists to arrive in the area, lay claim, established and named 'Canberra Station' an area of land which included this site. He named his station after the local Ngambri people. The name of

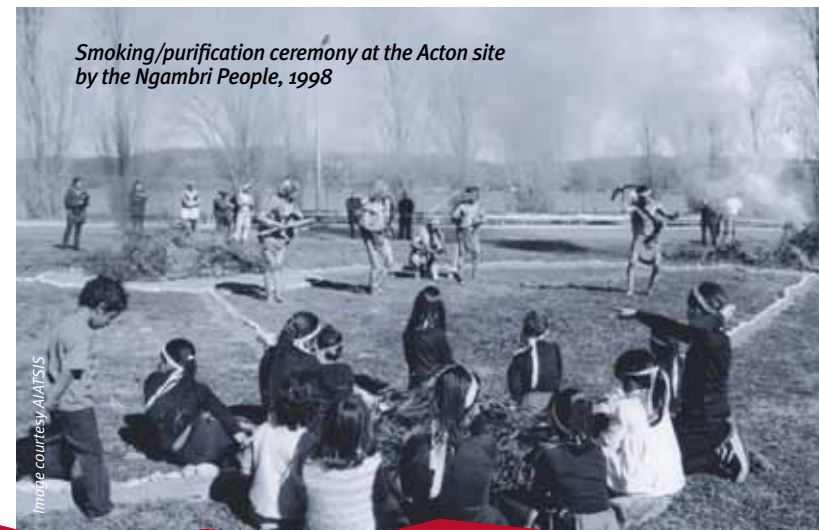
the district was proclaimed in the Government Gazette in January 1834. In 1913 Lady Denman (then wife of the governor-general) officially declared the name of Australia's capital city as Canberra. The name Canberra is an anglicised version of the many names derived from the name of my ancestral group, Ngambri.

In the 1940s the Canberra Hospital was built at Acton — as this site then became known. It holds a very special place in my heart to be able to say I was born at that old hospital — on one of the main Ngambri corroboree grounds. My ancestral grounds. It gives my connection to my country a tangible element.

In 1997 the Royal Canberra Hospital was demolished and the site was named as the new location for the National Museum. In 1998 I was a part of the group of Ngambri people who performed the smoking/purification ceremony over the site before construction commenced.

The Museum opened to the public in 2001. It seems to have come full circle that Acton was once a site of peoples gathering to celebrate, express and share cultures and through the Museum it is again a site which brings together nations of people to do the same thing. The Museum offers an opportunity to bring Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people together to share their stories of culture, heritage, personal histories and their experiences in Australia.

Paul House Girrawah



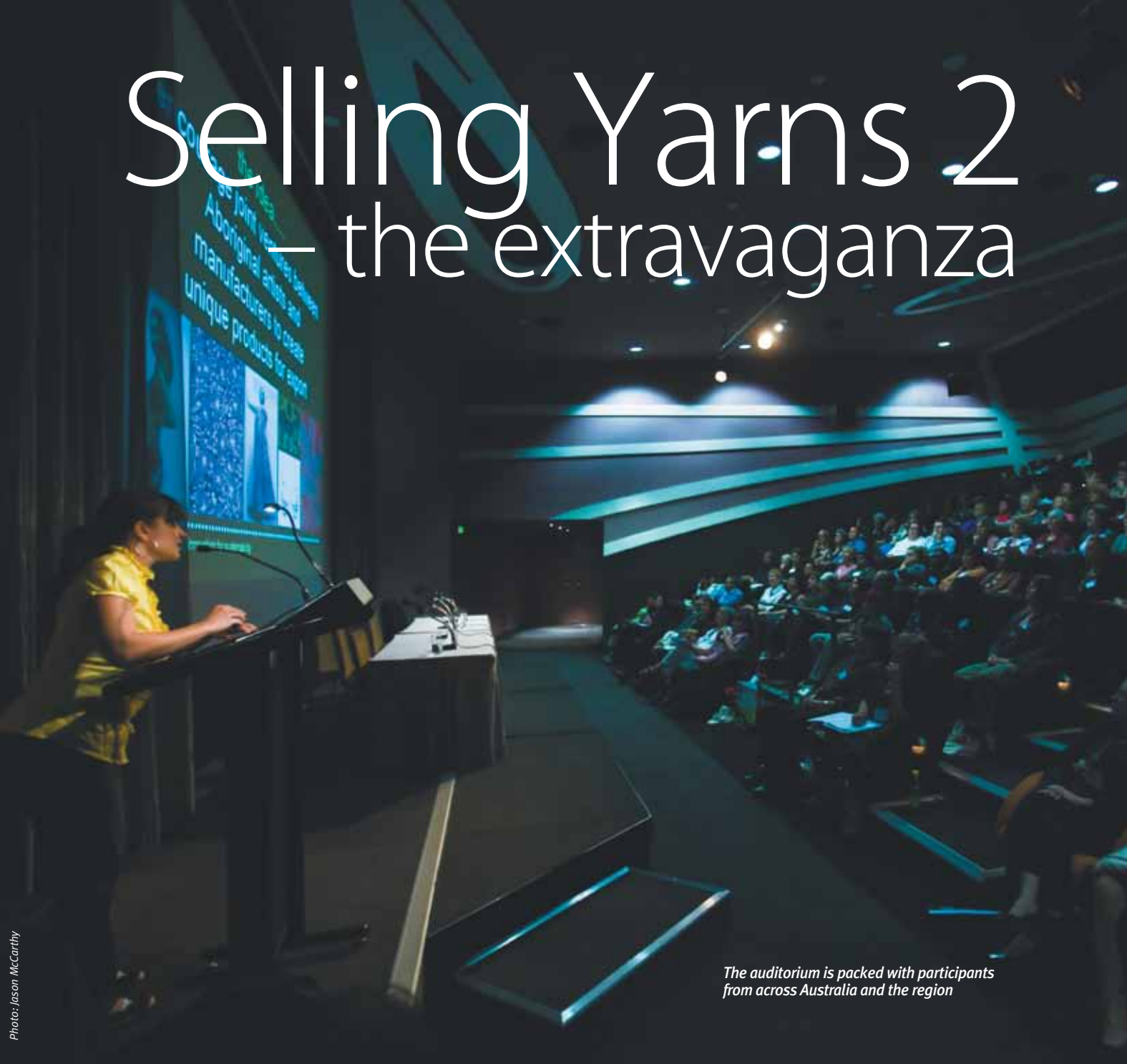
Smoking/purification ceremony at the Acton site by the Ngambri People, 1998



Bogong moths by Jim 'Boza' Williams and Mathew Harding, located next to the Museum carpark



# Selling Yarns 2 — the extravaganza



The auditorium is packed with participants from across Australia and the region

Photo: Jason McCarthy



Photo: Leise Knowles

Christina Hurihia Wirihana, of Te Roopu Raranga Whatu o Aotearoa, National Weaving Committee, NZ, wearing her traditional flax and feather cloak



Photo: Jason McCarthy

Nicole Foresheew and Brian Parkes of Object Gallery in Sydney



Photo: Jason McCarthy

Alison Page giving the keynote speech at the conference



Photo: Leise Knowles

Elder Roslyn Malngumba talks about the Arnhem Weavers project at Mapuru, NT

What a joy to see an auditorium full to the brim and to know that a second venue was in use, with all the action relayed by video link. This was Selling Yarns 2 — the extravaganza! People came from all over — Tasmania, the Coorong, South Australia, New Zealand, the South Coast, Cape York, the Rainforest, the Desert, Maningrida, Mapuru homelands, Northern Territory, Perth — in fact all states and territories in the country. And what a wealth of projects were shared and what stories were told.

The keynote speaker for the conference was Aboriginal designer and artist from La Perouse, Alison Page. Alison is well known for her time on the panel of the popular ABC television program, *The New Inventors*. She is also known for her work with Merrima Design Group, widely recognised as the first known all-Indigenous design company. Merrima specialises in working closely with local people

to create buildings that are truly meaningful to the people who use them — its aim is to assist communities to express their culture through their built environment.

However, nothing we knew about Alison prepared us for the reality! She started the program with a fiery speech and contributed throughout the conference with enthusiasm for the work of Indigenous practitioners. She encouraged the presenters and audience alike to see the potential for Indigenous business that engages and promotes employment for Indigenous people.

The range of presentations was as diverse as the places that the presenters came from. Some talked of projects to garner lost or threatened skills and cultural practices; others of developing well-preserved skills, and about the changes that evolve in those

practices as time passes. Other presenters talked about exchanges between communities with different fibre traditions, and of the many benefits that came out of such exchanges. Some presenters talked about the vital role that woven arts play in establishing other ventures within the community; this has created opportunities for communal planning and discussion when weavers sit and work together. And, of course, the subtitle of the conference — sustainability — was discussed and demonstrated during the workshop and market day.

The conference program included a whole raft of hands-on workshops, demonstrations and a market day. Where else in Canberra could you: try reeling silk from silkworm cocoons; stitch meadow hay; weave on a loom; or needle-felt a beanie? Conference delegates and some local artists had brought wonderful

things for workshop use and for sale, taking the opportunity to get their names known to a new audience. Sales were brisk to say the least.

The Museum was fortunate to have so many community members on site at the same time. Many of them explored some of the exhibitions and looked in at objects housed in Open Collections. This is an area of the Museum that is part storage and part exhibition space. It was opened for extended periods during the conference especially for the Selling Yarns participants.

Go to the Selling Yarns website and you can see the abstracts of all the papers and see who the contributors were to Selling Yarns 2 — Innovation for Sustainability. More photos from the four days are on the site too — [www.sellingyarns.com](http://www.sellingyarns.com).

**Andy Greenslade** Curator, ATSIP



# ...SY2 market day



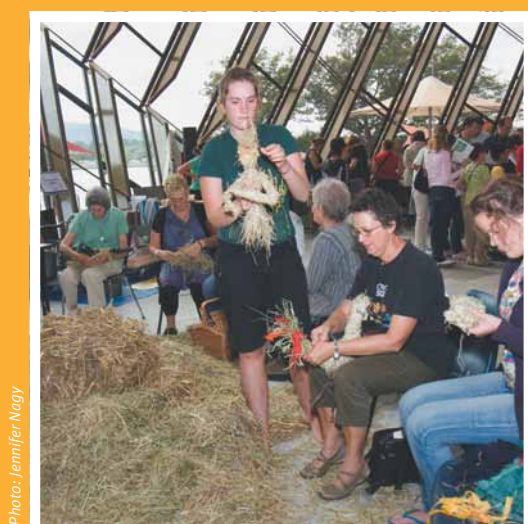
*Esther Kirby, an emu egg carver and decorator from Kerang, makes a sale. On her stall are two eggs carved by her late father Sam Kirby, 'the boss carver'*



*Lyndy Delian (l) and Belinda McDowell, both of Kemarre Arts, checking out some of Belinda's new painted glass work. In the background are some of Kemarre Arts textile works*



*Bobby Vosinthavong, Manager of Lao Silk and Craft, Melbourne demonstrates reeling the fibre from silk worm cocoons. Bobby established the Melbourne company to represent her family's silk farming and handicraft cooperative in Laos*



*Nalda Searles' Haystitching demonstration draws big crowds at the Selling Yarns 2 open day. Nalda has spent many years running fibre workshops across WA*



*Impiti Winton from Ernabella in South Australia spins wool using the traditional crossed stick spindle, during Gay Epstein's talk about the Alice Springs Beanie Festival. Impiti, whose spinning is very fine and even, won the Beanie Festival award for the best hand-spun beanie in 2008*



*Maureen Beeron from Girringun Aboriginal Corporation in Cardwell, Qld, demonstrates weaving a rainforest basket*



*Ngambri elder Matilda House with Rhonda Smith and Renee Smith. Renee was one of the artists who took part in IndigiGlass'08: Postcards from the Referendum, which reflected on the impact of the 1967 Referendum on their families*



*Linda Marathuarr from Mapuru, NT, takes part in a two day workshop with the weavers represented in the exhibition ReCoil: Trade and Exchange in Coiled Fibre Art*

## A Kalkadunga man visits the National Museum

Star didjeridu player William Barton, of the Kalkadunga people in Queensland, attracted a near-capacity audience to the Hall on 23 February when he appeared with the Song Company, in a concert celebrating his country by day and night.

William was first taught the didjeridu by his uncle when he was 8 years old. By the age of 11 he had become the leading didj player at traditional funerals and other ceremonies. He moved to Brisbane when he was 17 and became a soloist with several classical orchestras and ensembles. In 2003 he was appointed artist-in-residence with the Queensland Orchestra.

It may seem unusual to blend the sound of the didjeridu with classical European music, but that is how William has continued to build an international career. In the last few years he has performed in venues as various as the Royal Festival Hall in London, Carnegie Hall in New York, the dawn service at Gallipoli on Anzac Day and the National Day of Mourning ceremony for bushfire victims in Melbourne.

The Song Company's 'Kalkadunga Man' concert had its origins in July 2008 when William visited his country, camping out with photographer Allan Chawner. Allan rose to the challenge of capturing the landscape in all of its moods in a way which would illustrate William's life and work. In addition to impressive images of red rock, blue sky, white-stemmed gums and passing birds Allan experimented with starscapes, leaving the camera lens wide open at night to capture the circular path of the stars through the sky.



*William Barton (centre) rehearsing with the six members of the Song Company*

Using a creative blend of voices, images and stories as well as the sound of the didjeridu, the Song Company then built a concert program around compositions as modern as Ross Edwards' *Southern Cross Chants* of 2004 and as ancient as Bernard of Cluny's *Apollinis Eclipsatur* from the thirteenth century. The program proceeded in two parts, 'Day time' and 'Night time', with Allan Chawner's images projected onto the Optiwave above the performers and commentary and music from William.



*William Barton rehearsing*

*Photos: Brian Ellwood*

Though based in Sydney, the Song Company are on the road much of the time and often encounter the performance venue only hours before concert start time. Notwithstanding their relative unfamiliarity with the Museum, the singers and didj player rapidly discovered the unusual acoustics and adapted their performance to suit. At some moments the didjeridu was alone centre stage while the singers waited out of sight behind the pillars, allowing the sound of first one voice, then two, then three to fill the space until all six finally walked towards the stage, singing in brilliant harmony. There were more than a few of what we call 'goosebump moments' at this dramatic use of sound.

'Kalkadunga Man' has toured regional New South Wales as well as performing in Canberra and Sydney to great success, and will certainly reinforce William Barton's reputation as one of the great didjeridu players of the present day.

**Susan Tonkin** Assistant Director Audience Development and Public Programs



# My family stories are your history



Sharyn Egan speaks for Fanny Balbuk. Sharyn made the basket which is part of the Balbuk exhibit



(left to right) Hagge Best, Axel Best, Patricia O'Connor and Rory O'Connor — and in the centre their ancestor, Bilin Bilin. Axel features on the AV which is part of the exhibit



Theresa Ross stands next to the photo of her ancestor, 'Bullfrog'. Theresa features on the AV in the Coniston exhibit, telling the story in her Warlpiri language



Cressida Fforde beside the Yagan exhibit

Members of three families came together at the Museum in March for an event that remembers and celebrates their family histories. These were the descendants of people whose stories are told in the newly opened Resistance exhibit in the lower Gallery of First Australians. The Resistance exhibit tells just four of the thousands of stories of the way Indigenous families experienced the occupation of their countries by the colonisers. It recounts events of tragedy and courage as people experienced this extraordinary and destructive event.

The Best and O'Connor families travelled from Brisbane to celebrate the story of their ancestor, Bilin Bilin. Bilin Bilin was a warrior who came to realise that the best way to fight for his people was to make the hard decision to lay down his spears and negotiate ways to co-exist together.

Sharyn Egan had taken part in the Museum's Selling Yarns conference but stayed on to be here to celebrate the story of Fanny Balbuk, who lived in Perth over 100 years ago. Fanny's way of resisting the occupation was to never let the colonisers forget whose country they were living in. Her stories of country were used in evidence in the Noongar land claim.



Director of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program, Dr Mike Pickering, welcomes the families in the exhibition space

Theresa Naparrula Ross had come from Alice Springs to be there for the story of the 1928 Coniston Massacre that her father had witnessed as a young teenager, and of which another relative of hers had been the unwitting cause. Bullfrog obeyed the laws of the Warlpiri community, by killing a whitefella who had disobeyed Warlpiri law, but in doing that brought down destruction on his community. This story reminds visitors that the force of colonial occupation of Australia continued long past the initial invasion of 1788.

Sadly, Noongar elder Ken Colbung was too unwell to come to speak for Yagan, the young warrior murdered in Perth in 1833. After his murder, Yagan was decapitated and his head taken to England. Twenty years ago Ken Colbung set out to find Yagan's remains. Finally located through academic research they were brought back home for a cultural burial by descendants of his people. Ken was represented by Cressida Fforde, the researcher who on Ken's behalf finally located Yagan's remains. She spoke on the day about some of the cultural aspects she experienced during the negotiation of the return of Yagan's remains home to Perth.

These stories may have happened a long time ago but they are still alive in the community where they belong. However, to the wider Australian community they are often unknown. This exhibit is a chance to remember these moving stories and to bring them to the wider Australian community, giving us all a deeper understanding of those tragic and heroic events in our shared history.

Jay Arthur Curator, ATSI

# History, repeated ...



Representatives from the Wurundjeri Elders Council: Bill Nicholson Jnr, Vicki Nicholson-Brown, Alicia Kolassa, Winifred Bridges, Ron Jones and Annette Xiberras, with Museum curators Ian Coates and Christine Hansen at the presentation of the William Barak illuminated Address facsimile held at the Old Treasury Building, Melbourne

The Executive Council Chamber at the Old Treasury Building in Melbourne is one of the most important rooms in Victoria; it is where the State Governor gives vice-regal assent to legislation from the Victorian Parliament. It is a room rich in Indigenous and colonial history.

In the Chamber, in 1886 Wurundjeri elder William Barak presented an illuminated Address, an elaborately scripted and illustrated written 'address' popular in Australia in the 1880s and 90s, to a former Victorian premier, Graham Berry, who was returning to England.

As premier, Berry had earned the trust and confidence of the Wurundjeri people by supporting their move to secure their right to live at Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, near present-day Healesville.

The Address is a remarkable object from a remarkable Australian leader. William Barak was called on to operate in a European world while defending the rights of his people. The address was a nod to the European etiquette of the day as well as a potent political document setting a standard for the Victorian premiers who would follow Berry.

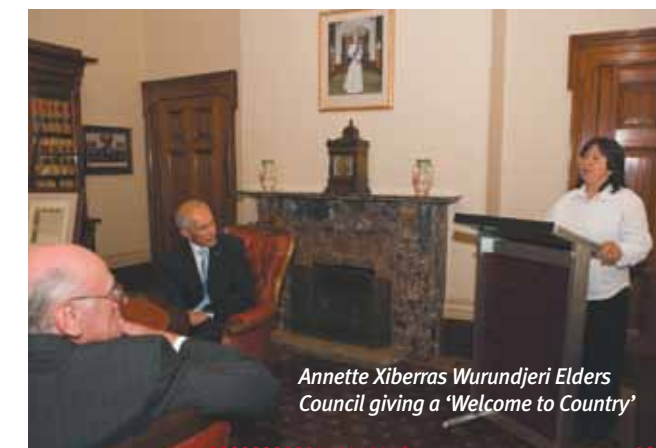
On the eve of the first anniversary of Sorry Day, National Museum staff arranged for reproductions of the Address to be presented to descendants of Wurundjeri who were present in 1886 in the same room where the original was presented.

Wurundjeri elders welcomed us to their country to begin a small but significant ceremony with the Victorian Governor, Professor David de Kretser, in attendance.

The Deputy Chair of the National Museum Council, Dr John Hirst, gave a description of the context and historical significance of the Barak Address, senior curator Ian Coates explained that the National Museum will study the Address, in particular to identify Barak's co-signatories. Curator Christine Hansen eloquently read the simple but powerful wording of the Address, and George Serras recorded the images. Registrar Carol Cooper, a published authority on Barak, was available for expert opinion.

Wurundjeri elder Ron Jones described the handover of the reproduction of the Barak Address as one of the most important days of his life and thanked the National Museum for helping to make it happen.

Dennis Grant Director of Public Affairs



Annette Xiberras Wurundjeri Elders Council giving a 'Welcome to Country'



# 'My story goes around the back': Truth and reconciliation in Bowraville

In 1965 the Freedom Ride protest, led by Charles Perkins, targeted the small mid-north coast town of Bowraville in New South Wales to expose its segregated theatre. In 2004, when Adam Perkins returned to Bowraville to unveil a plaque in honour of his father, the community confronted this past and in doing so took real steps towards reconciliation. With the assistance of the Bowraville community this story will be told in the Museum's forthcoming travelling exhibition, *From Little Things Big Things Grow* — about the struggle for Indigenous civil rights during the period 1920–70.

To tell this story of the acknowledgement of truth and reconciliation, with the valuable assistance of Lisa Milner, the Museum recently acquired two sets of seats from the old Ray-Mond Theatre in Bowraville. In September last year, two members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program team and a Museum photographer visited Bowraville to record local stories about the chairs. This visit was made a success because of the hospitality shown by Martin Ballangarry, 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, which led to his comment that 'my story goes around the back'.

## The Bowraville Theatre

The Ray-Mond Theatre opened in Bowraville in 1940. Like many other places across Australia, the theatre was segregated. Aboriginal people not only had to sit in a particular area, on inferior seating, they also had to enter by a particular door after the film had started. The Bowraville theatre seats are significant because, unlike other racially segregated societies like South Africa or southern America,



*Bowraville theatre seats, wooden ones used by Aboriginal patrons*

in Australia segregation was never expressed via public signs such as 'whites only'. For Martin, a visit to the movies involved entering the theatre from its rear door, in the dark after the film had started, sitting on wooden seats in the front of the theatre, and being ushered out before the film finished. That was the way it was.

## Segregation across Australia

While the Bowraville theatre was targeted by the Freedom Ride because of its policy of segregation, it was not an exception. Many theatres across Australia, including those in Darwin, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Broome, Perth, Narrogin, Cairns, Cunnamulla, Walgett, Coonamble, Gulargambone, Nambucca Heads, Yass, Collarenebri and Cowra, also

segregated their patrons. These seats therefore are a tangible reminder of the accepted racial practices across Australia in existence up until the end of the 1960s.

## Truth and reconciliation

In 2004, the Bowra Theatre re-opened with a smoking ceremony conducted by the local Gumbaynggirr people and a speech by Adam Perkins. The Bowraville seats in the Museum's collection therefore represent the history not only of a community divided by racial tension, but also of a community that has attempted to resolve that tension.

In September 2009 the Museum will be opening an exhibition that looks at what Australia was like in the period 1920 to 1970, including the story of segregation. In the case of Bowraville, it will be a story of grassroots truth and reconciliation.

**Kipley Nink**

*Assistant Curator, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program*



*Front façade, Bowraville theatre*



*Martin Ballangarry at the rear of the Bowraville theatre, describing how Aboriginal patrons were made to enter the theatre around the back*

# Honouring a leader

Edward 'Teddy Guy' Simpson's family converge on Museum



*The Simpson extended family gathered in the Main Hall*

In the lower Gallery of First Australians we have a display celebrating the achievements of a leader. The late Edward 'Teddy Guy' Simpson was the first Aboriginal in New South Wales to be elected to the position of mayor. His story is extraordinary on so many levels. He left school at age 15 to become a station hand and stockman for local properties. By 19 he was working as a ganger on the Queensland railways before becoming involved with 'The Sheds' — shearing sheds. 'The Sheds are fairly political with unions and that. That was a sort of stepping stone for me to enter the public arena', said Simpson in an interview in 2006. Simpson later spent eight years on the National Aboriginal Council (NAC) 1977–85, where he advised the prime minister and federal and state government agencies on issues relating to Aboriginal Affairs.

He was in essence a politician yet it is very rare for any politician to be remembered for courage, integrity, kindness and love — yet those are the words used to describe him by those who worked with him over the years, those who he represented on a political platform, those who claim him as family and friend and certainly those who he inspired by his particular brand of leadership. Christine Corby, a member of the community, said: 'People like Uncle Ted have shown me how to serve a community, to be in the fight and not on the sidelines'.

On Friday 14 November 2008, 60 of Simpson's closest friends and family converged on the Museum to celebrate his story being on display for the nation to see and share. The family came together from Brewarrina, Eden, Brisbane and Sydney to share this event as a family and community. It was also a time to revisit their memory of him through his objects that are on display. It had been just over a year since he passed away and they all gathered in a semicircle around the display in a long moment of respectful silence where all the emotions each felt were shared across the group. Simpson's children and grandchildren were excited and proud that his story was in the Museum. For the friends who had gathered it was a nod of acknowledgement to his memory, achievements and the community's loss of a great leader. One member of the group said, 'He demonstrated a real savvy in achieving representation for Aboriginal people in mainstream political processes. Especially during a time when we had to fight for our voice to be heard'.

Liz Simpson, the eldest daughter, said, 'My father used to say "It takes a lot of willing people to produce positive results and outcomes", and this (exhibit) is certainly a positive outcome for us — the family and the communities of Brewarrina and Walgett — to have our father and his life story as a Ngemba warrior and political leader remembered and honoured'.

**Barbara Paulson** *Curator, AT&SIP*



*Nolene Simpson with her grandchildren*



*The Simpson family*





# Walking in Two Worlds

*Generations at Ntwerle (left to right) Melanie Hayes, Camilla Hayes, Justin Hayes, Veronica Dobson*



Interviewed for the *Koori Mail* for the first anniversary of the Apology to families of the Stolen Generations, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd disclosed that he had writer's block when preparing his speech for the Apology, until he 'sat down, shut up and listened' to a member of the Stolen Generations. In August 2008 I had an opportunity to 'sit and listen' with the traditional owners of the country around Santa Teresa, or Ltyentye Apurte ('a stand of beefwood trees' in Arrernte). It is located 80 km south-east of Alice Springs.

I travelled to Central Australia to participate in a pilot cross-cultural leadership program 'Walking in Two Worlds' — five days camping out in a remote Indigenous community. The program was hosted by the Eastern Arrernte people of Ntwerle Aboriginal Corporation, in association with Whyte and Co (Sydney-based corporate coaches), and Keringke Arts Aboriginal Incorporation. Ntwerle, which means 'homeland', is located at Philipson Bore, on the Philipson Stock Route, near Ltyentye Apurte.

The Ntwerle families have a vision of developing an economically viable community, so that they can live on, and care for, the land to which they belong, and to maintain their culture as a dynamic living heritage for their children and future generations. The community is looking for ways to derive income from their knowledge of, and connection to, the land.

As a 'white fella' from the south, I was astounded at the stark grandeur of the country and the deep connections of the people to the land. The isolation, sleeping under the stars in a swag, feasting on fabulous camp oven tucker and the long walk to the 'long drop' dunny made for a genuine sense of adventure.

Highlights of the week included visits to Keringke rock hole and to Mpartwenge (Hayes Springs) and Irlkertye (Salt Springs) in the Ulampe-arenye Range. It was a particular privilege to see the work done by the community to rehabilitate the springs.<sup>2</sup> Our hosts

explained the significance of the sites and the plans which are underway to rehabilitate these special places and protect them from the further ravages of cattle and other introduced changes to the natural environment. Our host, Veronica Perrule Dobson, is a driving force behind these projects.

Other highlights included viewing the wonderful works of art based on traditional motifs at the Keringke Art Centre, sitting with Kathleen Kemarre Wallace to make dancing sticks, Victor Dobson's cheerful work around the camp, and going out in the bush with Justin Hayes, Christopher Wallace and other Arrernte men.

The action-centred leadership program developed by Whyte and Co was great. It was like learning by osmosis because we had to live the program in a physical and emotional sense, not just as an intellectual exercise and certainly not as 'theoretical book learning'. The program used a simple model for interacting with the community, involving deep listening, respect, and suspension of judgement. Living the model in a completely unfamiliar cultural setting proved to be a powerful learning tool.

*(left) Kathleen Wallace and (right) Anna Croce making dancing sticks*



Sitting and listening was the key. Learning to relate to people in a remote Indigenous community, in their 'office' and on their terms, provided great insight. I found that it is one thing to be sympathetic and respectful and have a theoretical cultural awareness, but quite another thing to really 'get it'. The experience included not just learning about Arrernte culture, but also gaining insights into the issues for remote communities today and into the future. I found that the experience was a series of epiphanies: 'Ah ha' moments, to use a term from my employee relations role.

An unexpected surprise was the introduction by the program facilitator, Judy Lovell of Keringke Arts, of self portraiture as a tool for self reflection and contemplation. We were encouraged to use supplied art materials during the week to produce figurative self portraits. Inevitably the red dirt of Ntwerle was incorporated into the works. It was a great tool for developing self understanding, a key characteristic for leadership.

Interacting with the skilled coaches from Whyte and Co, I learned a lot about leadership and about myself in the five days of the program. I learned about the importance of getting to know the group, of taking the time to listen and understand, before formulating and voicing responses. I developed my skills in exploring ideas and influencing outcomes. I learned that negotiating with the group is the key to achieving outcomes, not having great (or not so great) ideas and seeking to impose them. This is especially so in complex situations where there are tensions between various interested parties.

These lessons learnt are even contained in the land: I observed firsthand the devastating impact of Europeans on the fragile landscape, and on the vibrant living culture of Arrernte people. I realised the damage done by outsiders imposing ideas without taking the time to sit and listen to the traditional owners.

**Philip Graetz** *Workplace Relations Manager*

*Sitting and Listening: Planning with the Ntwerle Community: (Anticlockwise from the woman in the white hat seated at the front left) Anne Whyte, Veronica Dobson, Victor Dobson, Tony McGarn, Charlie Waltja, Ken Pritchett, Pip Pritchett, Anna Croce (kneeling in purple jumper) Camilla Hayes, Justin holding his sister Ruth Hayes, Melanie Hayes, Kathleen Wallace, Judy Lovell, Bobby Hayes, John Hayes, Kwementyaye Hayes, Liz McDonald, Wendy McGarn, Paul Laurence, Mark Grant, Ian McDonald*

*First day briefing at Ntwerle: (l-r) Victor Dobson, Anne Whyte, Veronica Dobson, Judy Lovell, Ken Pritchett, Pip Pritchett, Tony McGarn, Wendy McGarn, Mark Grant, Ian McDonald*



Photos: Philip Graetz



<sup>1</sup> Sorry: More than a word — exhibition booklet *Koori Mail* 2009. <sup>2</sup> See *Wetlands Australia NATIONAL WETLANDS UPDATE 2008*, Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, 2008.



# Barks, Birds & Billabongs

An international symposium exploring the legacy of the 1948 American–Australian Scientific Expeditions

*From the air there was a tree so full of white birds in its branches, so crested with birds it looked like a tree in flower. As the plane came over the tree-top broke into a wheeling white cloud ... under the right wing a big boomerang of blue water was shining in its verdant rim of rice-grass. Beside the billabong lagoon were a dozen tents, their canvas as sun faded green.*

The Arnhem Land Expedition (1948)



The expedition posed at Oenpelli

Camped in these tents at Gunbalanya (Oenpelli) 500 kilometres east of Darwin, in November 1948, were the 17 researchers and support staff of the 'the last of the big expeditions' as the Arnhem Land Expedition has been described, and the first major collaborative project with the United States. Led by photographer and self-taught ethnologist Charles P Mountford, the 1948 Arnhem Land Expedition is one of the most significant scientific expeditions ever mounted in Australia — and also one of the least understood. It was an extraordinary event that attracted national attention, with politicians, public figures, scientists and the media as they toured the capital cities attending vice-regal, civic and academic receptions, in the vein of other great explorations of the past. But 'despite the hype (and there was plenty of that), exploration — at least in the terrestrial sense — was not the main purpose', as Dr Martin Thomas, one of the academic consultants on the project, wrote in a paper recently. Rather, he notes, 'it was the frontier of knowledge that they hoped to penetrate'.<sup>1</sup> From various disciplinary perspectives, they investigated the Aboriginal people and the environment of the region.

In addition to ethnologists, archaeologists, photographers and filmmakers, the expedition included a botanist, a mammalogist, an ichthyologist, an ornithologist and a team of nutritional scientists and Indigenous guides. This team of intrepid 'cultural explorers' of

sorts undertook the seven-month odyssey, and encountered all the trials of such adventures in the days before roads in remote Arnhem Land. They swam across swollen rivers infested with crocodiles, losing food supplies on leaky vessels and stranded barges, and were rescued by the RAAF. They worked from three principal bases in Arnhem Land. Their first base was Groote Eylandt in the Gulf of Carpentaria. They later moved to Yirrkala on the Gove Peninsula and then to Gunbalanya (formerly Oenpelli) in west Arnhem Land. There were also secondary research trips to places such Delissaville (now Belyuen), Milingimbi Island, Port Bradshaw, Roper River and the islands off Groote Eylandt.

The journey involved the collaboration of vastly different sponsors and partners (among them the National Geographic Society, the Smithsonian Institution and various agencies of the Australian Government) and resulted in volumes of scientific publications, kilometres of film, thousands of photographs, tens of thousands of scientific specimens and a vast array of Aboriginal artefacts and paintings from across Arnhem Land.

In November 2009, the Museum's Centre for Historical Research will mount an international symposium which will investigate the expedition's significant and often controversial legacy — a legacy that is vast, complex, cross-cultural and largely unexplored. The collections assembled by the diverse team are dispersed across many institutions in the US and Australia, presenting a logistical challenge to those attempting to study their richness. However, one of the aims of the symposium is to develop a database on who got what, where. Another challenge is to deal with the ethical dilemmas of an event cast in a period when black–white relations were very different from what they are today.

In the 1940s Aboriginal people were the passive subjects of western scientists who were championed for their scientific exploits. But 60 years on we have the opportunity to acknowledge the enormous contribution of the Aboriginal communities whose cultural ingenuity, intellectual capital and labours were the foundation of what was accomplished and who feature in the thousands of photographs taken.

The symposium year will reflect the interdisciplinary makeup of the expedition itself and recreate the collaborative spirit. Visit our website for program updates and registration: [www.nma.gov.au/barks\\_birds\\_billabongs](http://www.nma.gov.au/barks_birds_billabongs).

**Margo Neale** Project Director



Charles Percy Mountford and Groote Eylandt artists, 1948

Photo: Frank M Setzler

Photo: attributed to Howell Walker

# Donating history

The Apology by the Australian Government to members of the Stolen Generations, given on 13 February 2008, marked a milestone in contemporary Indigenous history. The removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their communities was a major historical event of the twentieth century. While it had a welfare element, it was primarily aimed to 'solve' the perceived problem of a mixed race population. Children removed were never intended to return home to the Aboriginal community or keep an Aboriginal identity but assimilate into the 'white' population.

On the day of the Apology, Professor Peter Read donated to the Museum the booklet *The Stolen Generations* that he had written in 1981. This booklet marks the first time that the phrase 'the Stolen Generations' was used in a publicly printed article. This phrase was used in the Apology by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on 13 February 2008.

The booklet describes the concern the New South Wales Aborigines Welfare Board had with the growth of a population of people of mixed descent, which it regarded as a 'positive menace to the State'. The booklet tracks the efforts of the state to take children from their parents and assimilate them into white society, through the various New South Wales Acts which allowed Aboriginal children to be removed, sometimes just at the discretion of a local policeman or manager of an Aboriginal station, without necessarily having a court hearing. Not only were children removed from family and community, but crucially they were never intended to return. It was a removal from identity as well as from family.

The booklet and its story came about through the work Peter Read did for his PhD on the history of the Wiradjuri people of New South Wales. The research involved both oral history throughout Wiradjuri country, and working in the State Archives of New South Wales, reading files kept on state wards (and other topics relevant to Wiradjuri people). It was while reading these state wards' records that he saw the pattern of child removal and connected it to stated government policies. For families involved it had been a personal tragedy; they could not know that what happened to them was part of government policy.

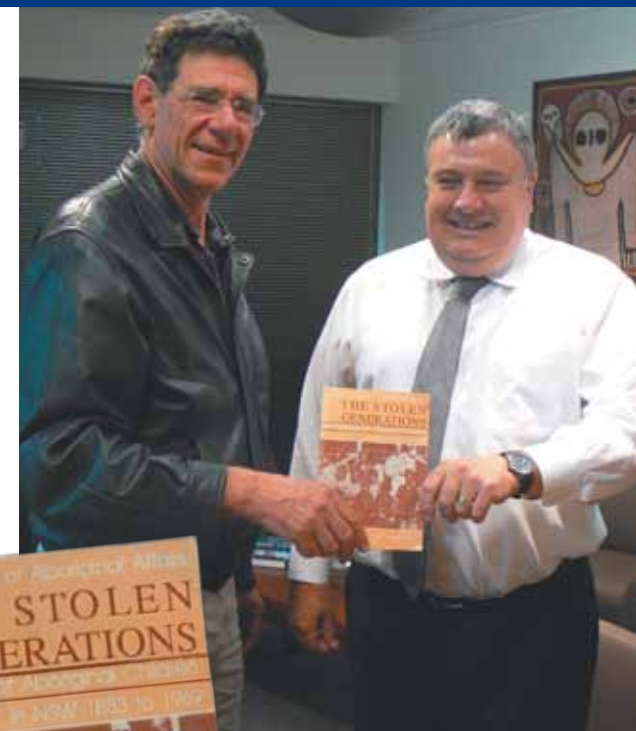
Since then *The Stolen Generations* has been reprinted many times, and republished four times. The latest edition was published in 2006.

Peter's research led him to found, with Coral (now Oomera) Edwards, the first Link-Up organisation. This organisation reunites removed children (now adults) with their families and also locates missing removed family members. It also provides a Link-Up community for those whose family ties have been irretrievably damaged by the removal process. There are now similar organisations of that name throughout Australia as the removal of children of part-descent was carried out in all states and territories.

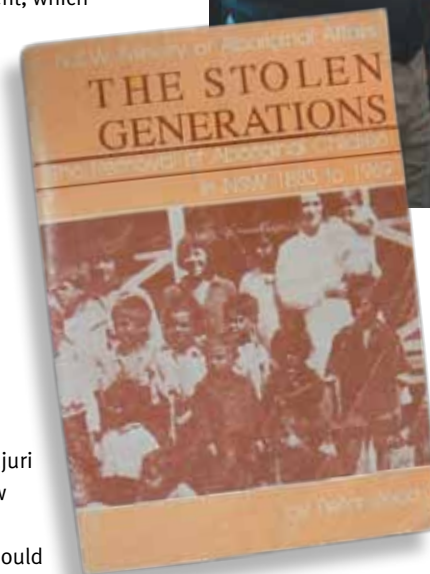
Peter has also worked on projects in Cuba and in Chile. These projects, among other things, look at the treatment and stereotyping of the Indigenous populations of those Spanish-occupied countries compared to the Australian Indigenous situation. He has found many similarities.

The Apology given by the Australian Government was as significant an event for him as well as for those affected. Peter donated this book — his personal copy — to the Museum to celebrate the momentous occasion and for the Museum to 'remember this story for the nation'.

**Jay Arthur** Curator, ATSIIP



Peter Read officially handing over his author's copy of the first edition print of *The Stolen Generations*



Left: *The Stolen Generations: The Removal of Aboriginal Children in NSW 1883 to 1969*, by Peter Read

Peter Read signing the book for presentation to the Museum



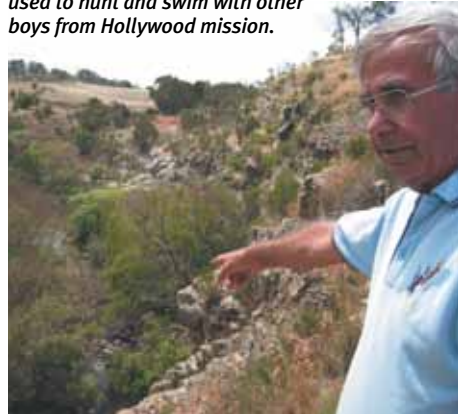
<sup>1</sup> Thomas, M, *In the Wake of the Arnhem Land Expedition*, Explore, March to May 2008.



# ATSIP NEWS

All articles by Barbara Paulson unless otherwise stated

*Eric Bell points out the river where his mum and aunties used to do the washing, the men used to fish, and where he used to hunt and swim with other boys from Hollywood mission.*



## Eric Bell – Memories of Hollywood mission

In February this year, I had the pleasure of visiting Eric Bell, a Wallabaloa (Ngunnawal) elder, to record his childhood memories of growing up on an Aboriginal mission. Eric, like many Aboriginal Yass residents, grew up on Hollywood mission, on the outskirts of town, and has spent most of his life in Yass.

Eric is well known as a proactive, passionate advocate for preservation of local history and culture, and it was in this capacity that he first met ATSIP curator, Jay Arthur. Since then, Eric has donated to the Museum a sheet of ripple iron that will be displayed in an upcoming exhibition.

The iron was originally used as building fabric at Hollywood mission and during my visit Eric recounted how the mission homes were constructed, laid out, and enhanced by their occupants to make them more habitable. Generously taking me around the old mission site and surroundings, he also described the dangers and difficulties of growing up on an Aboriginal mission and the pleasure of childhood in the local landscape. Excerpts of these invaluable recollections and photographs provided by Eric will be utilised to tell the story of Hollywood mission in the upcoming exhibition *From Little Things Big Things Grow*, and on the accompanying website.

**Karolina Kilian** Assistant Curator, ATSIP

## Urban forum now on Audio on demand

Audio on demand is an evolving collection of recordings from past and current lectures, forums and symposiums held at the Museum and accessed via the Museum's website. The latest recordings available are from the Who you callin' urban? forum. The forum, held at the Museum in July 2007, was an interesting mix of personal presentations, stories and an opportunity for Indigenous speakers to respond to current events. With laughter, irony and a dash of controversy this forum was a no holds barred discussion on contemporary issues faced by Indigenous people living in urban environments.

The discussions were open to questions such as: Are Indigenous people living in the city any less Indigenous than those living in remote areas? Are Indigenous people who drive cars, wear lipstick and drink lattes any less Indigenous than those who don't? The speakers came from diverse fields across arts and academia, including high-profile poets, writers, artists, curators, publishers and performers to discuss Indigenous identity and culture and how it is expressed in



urban environments and how it is — or isn't — represented in cultural institutions. To hear the audio, read the transcripts or for more information visit the website: [www.nma.gov.au/audio/](http://www.nma.gov.au/audio/).

## The Apology — we reflect . . .

13 February 2009 marks the first anniversary of the Australian Government's Apology to the Stolen Generations. Thousands of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people travelled to Canberra to participate in this historic event. Some were invited guests of the government, others crowded the lawns of Parliament House.

For many years Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people campaigned for recognition of the hurt caused by government policies promoting forced removal of children from their families. In 1995 the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission convened an Inquiry into this practice and its resultant damage. *Bringing Them Home*, the report of the Commission's findings published in 1997, recommended in section 5a.1: *That all Australian Parliaments officially acknowledge the responsibility of their predecessors for the laws, policies and practices of forcible removal.* Eleven years later, on 13 February 2008, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, on behalf of the Australian Government, offered this apology.

In acknowledgement of the anniversary of this historic event the Museum produced a display reflecting on the event and its meaning for Australians. The Museum also held a staff morning tea to further the understanding that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities across Australia were affected by the policy and practice of 'removing the children', that the staff they work with and alongside were affected.

Mary Terszak with her Certificate of Exemption



Susan Donaldson, Vivien Mason and Natasha Stewart on tour in the Gallery of First Australians

## Visitors from Narooma

Last October we hosted a visit by Vivien Mason and Natasha Stewart, members of the Narooma community, and Susan Donaldson, an anthropologist working in the community. Narooma is situated on the south coast of New South Wales. After looking at some artefacts from the New South Wales south coast on display in Open Collections, we took a tour through the other galleries. Vivien, Natasha and Susan were particularly interested to see a prawn net used by John Brierley, a professional fisherman who lives at Moruya, a little to the south of Narooma. John fishes in the same area his family has always lived and his story was included in the display on fishing to illustrate the point that he continues traditional practices in an area where a lot of people do not expect this to be the case.

**David Kaus** Senior Curator, ATSIP

## Sharing our History and our Future

For NAIDOC 2009 the Museum will be producing a program of events to celebrate First Australians culture and heritage. One project will be the *Sharing our History and our Future* exhibition that will be on display in the Hall during July 2009. *Sharing our History and our Future* is an exhibition of photographs illustrating the cultural sharing and storytelling practices of First Australians and of the Museum's engagement with communities and individuals. The exhibition will present photographs by Koori photographer Wayne Quilliam and Museum photographers George Serras and Lannon Harley. The images document events, people, cultural practice and the processes of engagement between First Australians and the Museum, both within the museum and within communities. It also expresses the diverse styles of sharing and relating of histories.



Vince Peters shares his story with curator Jay Arthur

## Cross-cultural educators visit the Museum

Veronica Perrurle Dobson and Judy Lovell are cross-cultural educators who visited the Museum in March 2009. Veronica and Judy came to Canberra on cultural business for the Ntwerle Aboriginal Corporation and took the opportunity to meet with senior executives from the Museum to present future plans for the Walking in Two Worlds program and discuss ways in which the Museum may become involved. Veronica is a traditional owner at Ltyentye Apurte (Santa Theresa) and has been an educator for many years providing cross-cultural awareness training for government staff and visitors before they go out into the remote communities in Central Australia. Veronica said of her visit, 'One of the things that really impressed me about coming to Canberra was the landscape which is so different to my country, and I like the way the houses are situated inside the natural landscape'. Judy is associated with Ntwerle, Keringke Arts and the Santa Theresa community and is a spokesperson and advocate for the Walking in Two Worlds program. Judy specialises in workplace approaches for individuals and groups seeking to develop high level reflective and evaluative practices. Her focus is on cross-cultural capacity building to strengthen knowledge transmission. Both women were delighted with their trip to Canberra to share information with the Museum.



Philip Graetz, Veronica Dobson, and Judy Lovell

## Deadly pics

Koorie photographer Wayne Quilliam has been photographing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander gatherings in communities across Australia for over 20 years. Gatherings are events for sharing, telling stories, connecting with family, culture and country. A selection of his work will be on display in the Main Hall in July 2009. The photographs capture moments such as from gatherings, including the smoking ceremonies held beside the Yarra River, Melbourne at the 2006 Commonwealth Games, the 2008 Garma Festival in Northern Territory, and the Mornington Island after school play groups. Showcasing is an excuse to gather, but the real joy is in the communications that happen on the sideline.' says Wayne Quilliam (2009).

For more information of the NAIDOC programs and events at the Museum visit our website [www.nma.gov.au](http://www.nma.gov.au)



International photographer Wayne Quilliam



# VEE breastplate



Burke, Wills and King breastplate

A breastplate made in 1861 was recently acquired for the National Historical Collection. It is one of three breastplates presented to the Yandruwandha of Cooper Creek 'for the Humanity shewn to the Explorers Burke, Wills and King'. The second plate is in the South Australian Museum and the whereabouts of the third plate is currently unknown. The plates were engraved by the Melbourne engraver Xavier Arnoldi (about 1843–76) and cost £1.5.0 each to engrave. The National Museum's plate is crescent shaped measuring 207 mm long, 93 mm high and weighs 150.2 grams.

In December 1860, Robert O'Hara Burke, William John Wills, Charley Gray and John King of the Victorian Exploring Expedition (later called the Burke and Wills Expedition) set out for the Gulf of Carpentaria with six camels and Burke's horse, Billy. Four men stayed at Camp 65 at Cooper Creek. Burke and Wills reached a tidal channel but were unable to get through to the ocean. However, they had reached their goal.

They had eaten two-thirds of their food on the way to the Gulf. On their return, storms, torrential rain, extreme heat and humidity slowed their progress. The camels hated the boggy ground. Running out of food, the men began eating the animals. Gray grew weak and he died on 17 April 1861.

A few days later Burke, Wills and King arrived back at Camp 65, totally exhausted, almost starving and hardly able to walk. They were expecting help and a rousing welcome but the camp was deserted. The rest of the party had given up and had left only hours before. Burke, Wills and King found the few supplies that had been buried. The explorers did not know how to live off the land but when they ran out of food they were supplied with fish and nardoo by the Yandruwandha. When their benefactors moved on, they existed on nardoo alone which made them feel full but was actually poisoning them because it was not properly prepared. Burke and Wills both died on the banks of the Cooper.

After their deaths, the Yandruwandha cared for John King and alerted Alfred Howitt's relief party to his whereabouts on 15 September 1861.

King returned to Melbourne, the only survivor of the party that set out from Cooper Creek for the Gulf. The next year Howitt returned to Cooper Creek to gather the remains of Burke and Wills for burial in Melbourne. It was on this second trip that he presented the breastplates, especially commissioned by a grateful Victorian Exploration Committee. Senior curator at the National Museum, David Kaus, notes that leaving the name off the plates is highly unusual. This was probably done because Howitt was not sure who they should be presented to.

This breastplate records a cross-cultural encounter and the appreciation of the people of Melbourne for those who cared for the explorers. It will feature in the new Creating a Country gallery, in an exhibit on the experience of famous colonial explorers, Matthew Flinders, Ludwig Leichhardt and the team of Gregory Blaxland, William Wentworth and William Lawson.

The Creating a Country gallery is due to open at the National Museum in 2010. Ten key themes in Australian history are interpreted through a focus on events in particular times and places, representing the diversity of experience across the country. The places associated with each story range around the nation from the south coast to arid heartland and from rocky, eucalyptus-clad escarpments to the tropical north. They will reflect something of the range of encounters with place and with the environment that so shaped the Australian experience.

**Pip McNaught** Curator, *Creating a Country*

# Artefacts document history



Engraved boomerang

Fighting club with nails

From the late nineteenth century

Aboriginal people in eastern Australia created a range of artefacts decorated with incised, carved, painted and poker-worked motifs, which documented their experiences of interaction with European settlers.

This collection, recently purchased by the Museum, features a variety of these objects from several key sites, including two of the most important east coast mission stations, Cherbourg and La Perouse. The objects range from boomerangs, shields, spear throwers and clubs to walking sticks and stockwhip handles. Used as trade items as well as personal tools, these kinds of decorated artefacts quickly became sought after, and as production increased they found a market as tourist souvenirs.

Although the collection includes some boomerangs, shields and other objects that are thought of as more 'traditional', their construction often mixes the use of metal and wood and the decoration incorporates images from diverse sources such as cartoons or popular graphic novels, which show the interests of the day. These unusual pieces are known as 'transitional art', as they tell the story of how new materials and technologies, as well as stories, were incorporated by Aboriginal people in their art and craft works. This 'mixing up' demonstrates the transition in lifestyle that Aboriginal people were experiencing at the time.

One of the distinctive features of this type of art is the way designs emerged specific to individual missions. A very recognisable cross-hatching pattern was used as a background to playing-card motifs such as hearts, diamonds, clubs and spades on the items from Cherbourg, for example. The Cherbourg objects also have decorations which depict hunting parties, mounted police, stockmen and other scenes from daily life. The La Perouse objects on the other hand depict mostly plants and animals, with a kookaburra in a tree and an unfurling cycad being a commonly used design.

Unfortunately these types of artefacts are not well represented in museums, where the range of objects being made by Indigenous people in eastern Australia during this period, particular those living on missions, has largely been ignored. As one curator found when he began to research similar items, some of the objects examined from early museum collections had 'degenerate modern' written on them by past curators because they were adorned with skilfully produced and faithfully rendered figurative imagery.

This attitude is slowly changing as the acquisition of this important collection demonstrates, allowing the Museum to use objects such as these to research the rich histories of the early mission days.

**Christine Hansen** Curator, *ATSIP*



Painted boomerang



Scrimshaw horn



Carved wood handle stockwhip



Blazes almost closed on tree at Camp 65 at Cooper Creek (2008)



Remains of stockade 'Fort Wills' behind blazed tree at depot camp 65 (1890)



# Albert Croker's Water buffalo



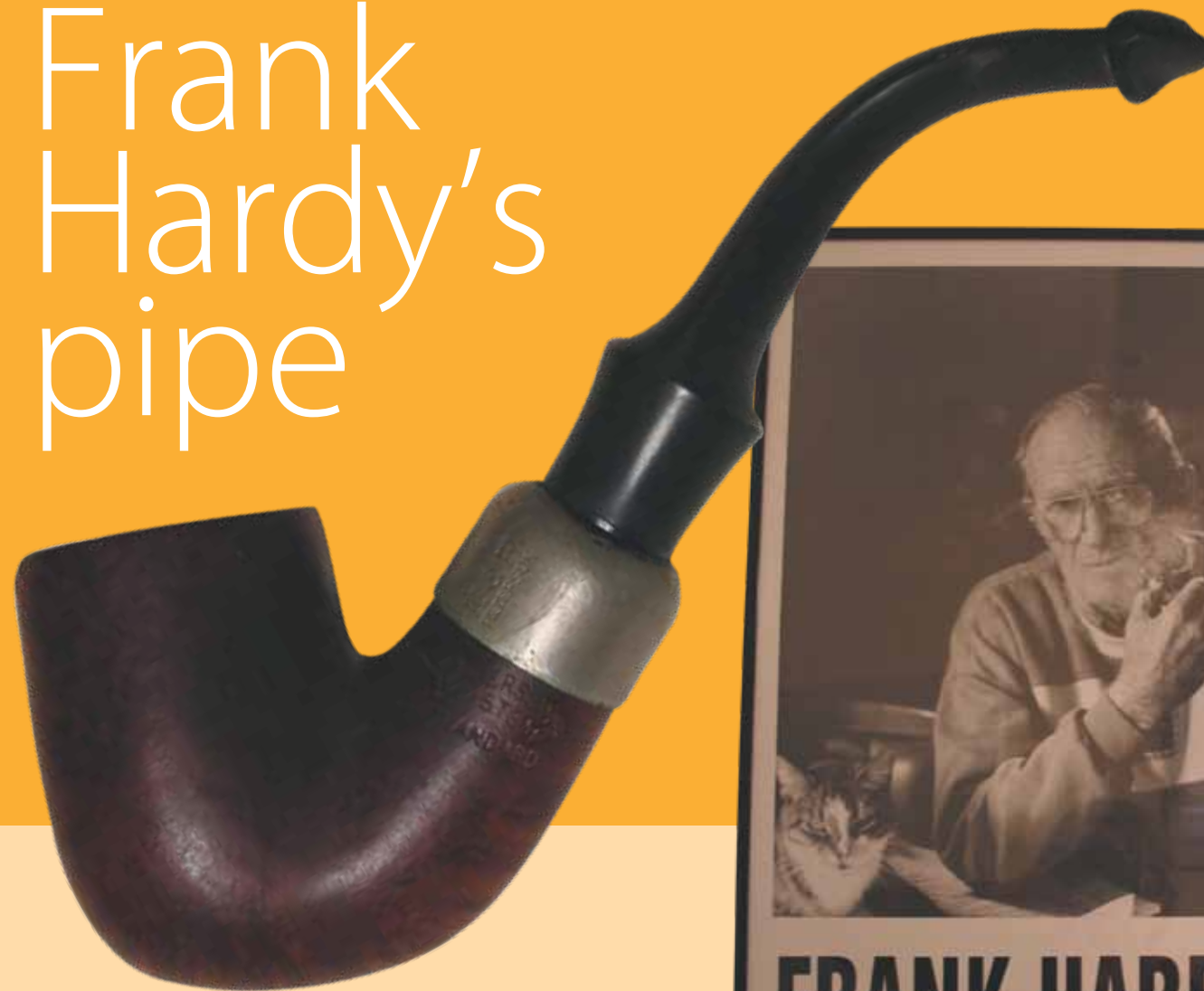
This hand-carved water buffalo was made by Albert Kulappaku Croker of Milikapiti, Melville Island in 1964. It is made of iron wood and intricately decorated using natural earth pigments. Albert Kulappaku Croker (about 1908–1968–71), also known as Dediainduwangi, Galabagu and Big Albert Croker, was an elder of Paru village on Melville Island and a respected carver of traditional 'tutini' poles. He also had the title of 'Iwaidja' (keeper of Tiwi oral history). He is listed as one of the Milikapiti (Snake Bay) coastal watch patrolmen organised by the Royal Australian Navy in 1942.

Water buffalo were introduced to Melville Island and the Cobourg Peninsula, Northern Territory, from Indonesian islands between 1825 and 1843. They were used for meat, and when the settlements were abandoned in the early 1950s, the buffalo were left to breed up into uncontrolled, feral herds. From the 1960s until the 1980s the numbers peaked to 350,000, dominating and destroying the ecology of permanent and semi-permanent wetlands across the Top End and on Melville Island. Small pockets of buffalo survived the brucellosis and tuberculosis eradication campaign launched in 1979, and are still a source of meat for communities on Melville Island.

Tiwi artistic tradition is largely centred around the 'Kurlarma' and 'Pukamani' ceremonies and the water buffalo has been incorporated into the creation stories of the Tiwi, as demonstrated by the large buffalo 'tutini' pole on Melville Island carved by Albert Croker. Carving was almost exclusively restricted to the production of Pukamani burial poles and ceremonial paraphernalia until the Second World War when government visitors and defence personnel at Milikapiti started buying Tiwi art for souvenirs. The production of small, portable carvings has become an economic necessity and an opportunity for the craft to continue and evolve. Traditional attitudes and values held towards carving and creativity have been determining factors in the acceptance and development of viable craft industries. Albert Croker's carving of a water buffalo not only demonstrates the artist's creativity, a trait admired in Tiwi culture, it also illustrates the flexibility of Tiwi tradition to draw inspiration from new experiences and influences.

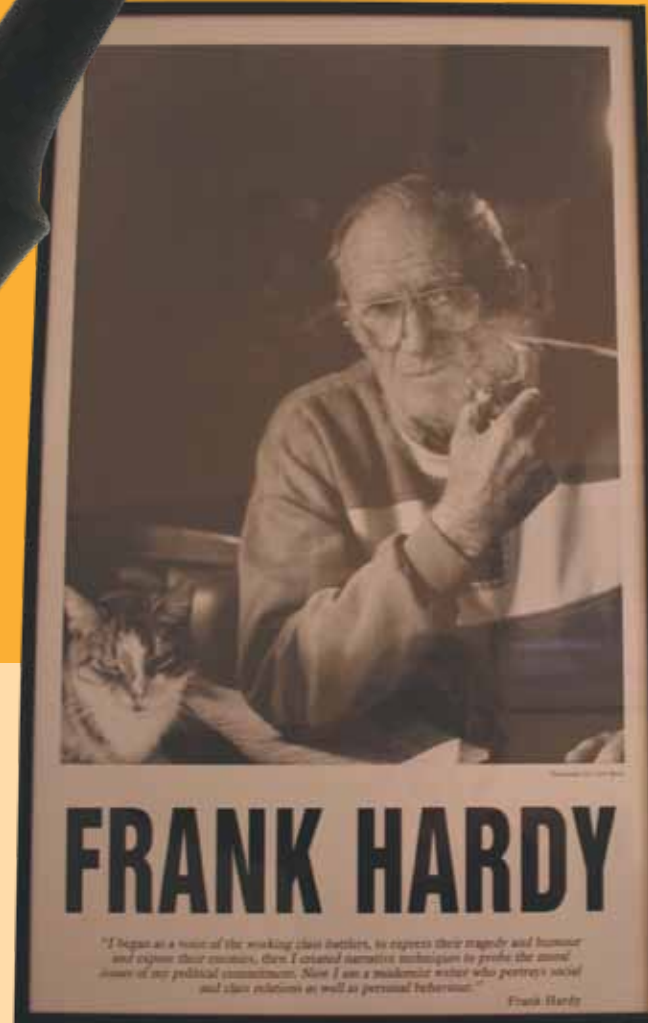
**Sharon Goddard** Assistant Curator, ATSIP

# Frank Hardy's pipe



The Museum has recently acquired a tobacco pipe that belonged to writer and activist, Frank Hardy. Frank's son Allan, who is holding the pipe in the photo below, says his father took up pipe smoking in the 1960s and over the next 30 years it became something many people associated with his father as a public figure. The photographic record of Frank from the 1960s bears this out. Whether it's writing at his desk, speaking at a public meeting or sitting with the Gurindji up at Wave Hill, Frank is invariably holding or puffing on his pipe.

The pipe will be part of the coming exhibition *From Little Things Big Things Grow*, which tells the story of the Indigenous civil rights movement. Frank's pipe will be used to help tell the story of the Gurindji strike, alongside anti-Vestey's stickers and a Wave Hill spur.



Frank met the Gurindji strike leaders in the Northern Territory in 1966, and was inspired by their stand. He began writing of the Gurindji strike for southern papers, documenting the ongoing concerns and demands of the Gurindji and bringing them to the attention of an urban white audience. He was one of the first non-Indigenous supporters to recognise that the Gurindji were not striking for better wages and conditions, but for the return of their traditional lands.

During this period, he began working on *The Unlucky Australians*, which was published in 1968. Hardy formed the 'Save the Gurindji committee', and with the CPA (Communist Party of Australia), unions and the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders mounted a concerted campaign of fundraising, lobbying, publicity and protest in support of the Gurindji cause, including rallies outside Vestey's Sydney and London offices.

The Museum thanks Allan Hardy for the generous donation of the pipe. *From Little Things Big Things Grow* will open at the Museum in late 2009, and will tour nationally in 2010.

**Suzanne Gibson** Curator, ATSIP

# Jawun bicornual basket



This 'jawun' or bicornual basket was made by the Naipwygi or Wargamaygan Aboriginal people of north-east Queensland. 'Jawun' baskets are unique to the Indigenous rainforest groups of north-east Queensland in the near-coastal region between Cairns and Ingham, just north of Townsville. 'Jawun' are made from split lawyer cane that grows prolifically in the subtropical rainforests. The distinctive curved base is achieved by stringing several strands like a bow. The long handle, missing from this example, is used for carrying the basket behind the back suspended from the forehead, allowing the wearer to roam the forests hands-free to collect food. Some 'jawun' are decorated using ochres, charcoal and the maker's blood. The construction and shape makes the 'jawun' strong and very versatile. As well as carrying personal belongings, they were used as fish traps, and for collecting fruit, eggs, roots and meat. Their shape makes them ideal as sieves for leaching toxins from seeds and nuts because the water is able to escape quickly. The basket containing nuts such as Moreton Bay chestnuts or black beans was suspended over running water and the poisons washed out, which also removed the bitter taste. Larger baskets were used by women for carrying babies and smaller models by men to carry tools, weapons and sacred objects. 'Jawun' were also traded with people further south in Townsville area and north to Port Douglas.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century European pastoralists and Chinese miners established settlements in the area. Conflicts over land and resources resulted in the displacement of Indigenous people to missions and reserves with restricted access to areas of lawyer cane needed to make 'jawun'. This, coupled with the distribution of rations to those living as labourers on farms and at missions, saw the production of 'jawun' all but cease and they are now rare. In the 1970s the traditional owners purchased several sugar cane farms in the Murray Upper area south-west of Tully and established the Indigenous community of Jumbun where they are now able to access the lawyer cane. As well as farming, they conduct tours along traditional walking tracks emphasising the importance of the rainforest to their culture, and demonstrate basket weaving and bush food traditions. A few contemporary artists have revived the skills and knowledge needed to make these distinctive 'jawun' baskets. The social aspect of fibre craft practice and collecting bush foods encourages the exchange of traditional knowledge within and between generations and family groups.

**Sharon Goddard** Assistant Curator, ATSIP



# Next issue highlights

- The civil rights exhibition *From Little Things Big Things Grow*
- Canning Stock Route exhibition and projects
- More on *Barks, Birds & Billabongs* symposium
- NAIDOC events on the Acton Peninsula
- 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 November 2009.**

Photo: Jason McCarthy



Bogong Moth sculptures by Jim 'Boza' Williams and Mathew Harding

*Matilda House and Lee Darroch wearing Darroch's 'Biganga Wuta Yenbena (possum skin cloak for all Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people)' as showcased at the Selling Yarns 2 Conference*



Photo: Jennifer Nagy

*Didj players, Jon and Caleb Juda, in the lower Gallery of First Australians*



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*Goree: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander News from the National Museum of Australia can be downloaded from our website [www.nma.gov.au](http://www.nma.gov.au)*

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