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Goree

ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER news

FROM THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA

Exhibitions

Histories

Artists' workshop

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA CANBERRA

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Bottom right: Janet Fieldhouse and Hayley Hoolihan lead craft workshops at the NAIDOC on the Peninsula and 'One road' Festival. Photo: Kellie Robson

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Email mates@nma.gov.au

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA

Welcome. As the new Director of the National Museum of Australia I'd like to acknowledge the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples. In my previous position as Director of the National Portrait Gallery I came to know many of the community elders and I look forward to their continued contributions to the rich cultural life of the Australian Capital Territory through their engagement with the Museum.

It has been an exciting start for me since I took up my new position in June. In my second week in the job I travelled to China for the opening of the Museum's *Papunya Painting: Out of the Australian Desert* exhibition held at the National Art Museum of China in Beijing. Upon return to Australia I was pleased to host the opening of the *Yiwarra Kuju: The Canning Stock Route* exhibition. In many ways *Yiwarra Kuju* is an exemplary exhibition. It is a rich tapestry of interwoven stories: creation stories, biographical stories and stories about everyday life. The exhibition can be appreciated on so many levels, from the enjoyment of colour to the engagement with historical detail.

What stands out is the enthusiasm of local and international visitors for information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lives and cultures. There is a real desire to learn about their cultures and that desire is as strong in China as it is in Australia. Our ambition is to encourage and fuel that interest.

Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures have long been an interest of mine, and I have written extensively on the history of Aboriginal artists. My new position provides me with the opportunity to once again pursue this interest. I look forward to the next chapter in the Museum's history and to continued partnerships and collaborations with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia.

Andrew Sayers AM

Inside *Papunya*

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

I would like to acknowledge the local Ngunnawal and Ngambri people from the region, and others of our community who have made Canberra their home.

In terms of employment at present, we have around 14 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members working across a number of areas at the Museum. About half of them are working in Visitor Services — an area which allows the public to gain Indigenous perspectives on all parts of Australia's shared history. A number of people have been employed through the Australian Public Service Indigenous Pathways traineeship program. which provides structured training and development culminating in a nationally recognised qualification in government as well as full-time permanent employment. The most recent trainees are Tynan Waring and Meiko Bell. Others who came through our cadetship program received up to four years support whilst attaining university degrees and undertaking permanent employment. So brothers and sisters out there get with the game — the Museum is a deadly place to get your career started. You don't even have to live in Canberra.

Under our current Workplace Diversity Plan, an Implementation Group has been established and Indigenous employment is one of the three priority areas. A new development towards this is the assignment of an Assistant Director for Indigenous employment. The Director confirmed that workplace diversity is core business for the Museum and stated that it is a central plank in the prospective five-year strategic plan. He said, 'It is not just about staff, but also about the Museum's profile and culture. A key issue will be aligning resource decisions to the strategic plan and developing robust performance indicators'.

Watch this space!

Margo Neale

MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PROGRAM

Welcome. I'd like to acknowledge the Ngambri and Ngunnawal traditional owners of the Canberra region, as well as all those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have made the Australian Capital Territory their home.

The year so far has been characterised by some major successes in the telling of the stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. You may recall in 2008 the Museum staged a highly successful exhibition *Papunya Painting: Out of the Desert*. In May and June this year this exhibition was reworked and travelled to the National Art Museum of China in Beijing where it was the inaugural exhibition in the Year of Australian Culture in China.

Following on rapidly from this was *Yiwarra Kuju: The Canning Stock Route* exhibition. The opening of this exhibition was honoured by the attendance of many of the Aboriginal artists, curators and filmmakers who shared their stories and their skills with visitors through a series of public programs and events.

However, it is easy to be distracted by the bright lights and fanfare associated with opening large exhibitions. No less important are the smaller changes in our permanent exhibition spaces. Especially satisfying was the recent display of an artwork created by Peta Edwards. This artwork, entitled *Can You Imagine (Mum's Story)* tells the story of the removal of Peta's mother, Dianne Clayton, from her parents — an event that affected four generations. Peta's work currently hangs alongside the artwork by Albert Namatjira, which he presented to the girls of the Cootamundra Girls' Home. Peta may not be as well known as Albert but her story is no less important. We were pleased to have Peta and her family, plus some of the students of Lithgow High School, present when the display went public.

These stories, and many more, are told in this issue of *Goree*. We hope you enjoy it.

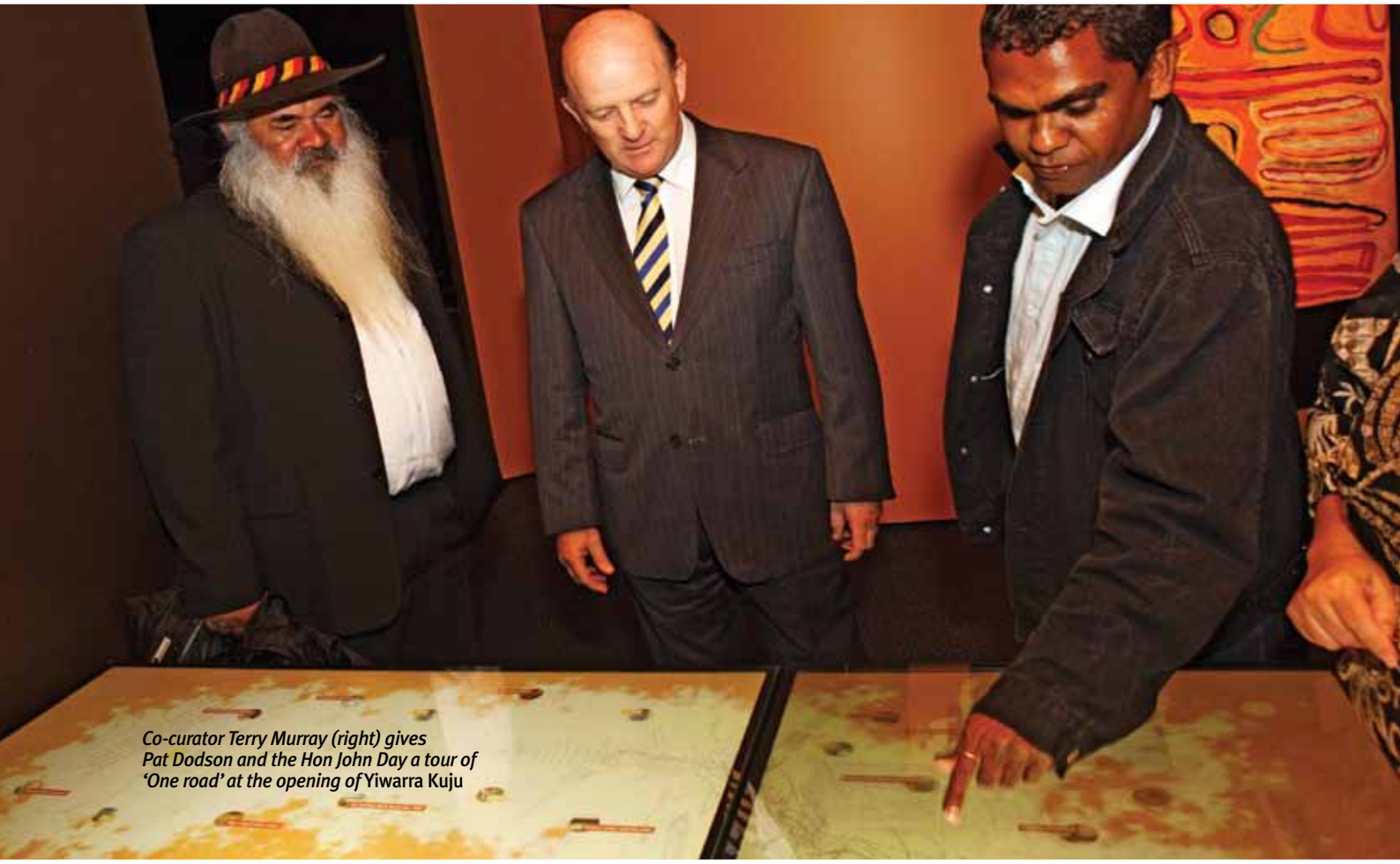
Michael Pickering

Everyday Heroes **exhibit**

I Told You So ... **exhibit**

Oldest culture, newest

Journeys into the heart of Aboriginal country



Co-curator Terry Murray (right) gives Pat Dodson and the Hon John Day a tour of 'One road' at the opening of Yiwarra Kuju

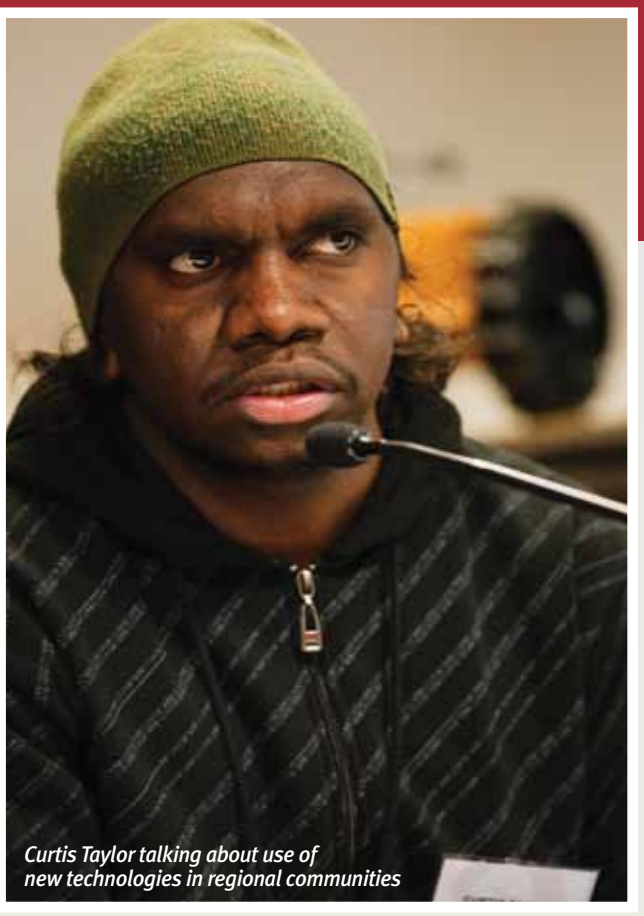
Alfred Canning's stock route snakes across the 10 multi-touch tabletop screens of 'One road', an 8-metre long multimedia installation that is the signature piece of *Yiwarra Kuju: The Canning Stock Route*. Canning's intricately drawn map is outlined by red sand — as if it's been rolled out on the desert floor. Visitors draw pictures and patterns in the sand with their fingers. The movement of ants and lizards animates its surface. A blind mole unexpectedly surfaces from its burrow. A majestic rainbow serpent stops visitors in their tracks. Interestingly, it's the only thing in 'One road' that visitors can't manipulate.

A lot of Jukurrpa [Dreaming] stuff in the exhibition is like dreams within a dream. We're trying to make that real for people … If white people want to understand the Jukurrpa and what it's all about, the true meaning, that's what's in the paintings … But that 'One road' interactive is like us [young people] today. 'Cos we muck around with cameras and sound and computers [but] the old people, the Martu, were one of the last people to come in from the desert. We've got all this archive — in the stories, and the songs, and the land — but we want to put it somewhere so that generations of tomorrow can see it. Curtis Taylor

Twenty-one year old Martu filmmaker Curtis Taylor worked closely with the multimedia team on 'One road', and produced three films for the interactive. Curtis sees it as a valuable resource, a 'treasure box' of stories, videos, photographs and historical material that offers visitors a privileged insight into the lives of Western Desert people, and into the heart of their Country. Hundreds of stories, short films, historical records and paintings are embedded in the map's interface, and each is located geographically in the Country it relates to culturally and historically. Visitors can read a story, watch videos of the Country it takes place in, see the people involved and listen to their stories, look at paintings that relate to the area, and observe what the Country looks like via satellite. For Curtis such multi-layered storytelling allows the meaning of the old people's stories, and their feeling for Country, to resonate more deeply with visitors.

You can see the person telling the story and the Country where it happened — how it looks, the landscape. You see it, not just hear about it. I think that's the thing that hits people. They can see it and they think, 'Oh I'm there. I've been there,' because they've seen it with their own eyes. And that's the way we're thinking about it now. Returning to Country, you can't put a price on it. Curtis Taylor

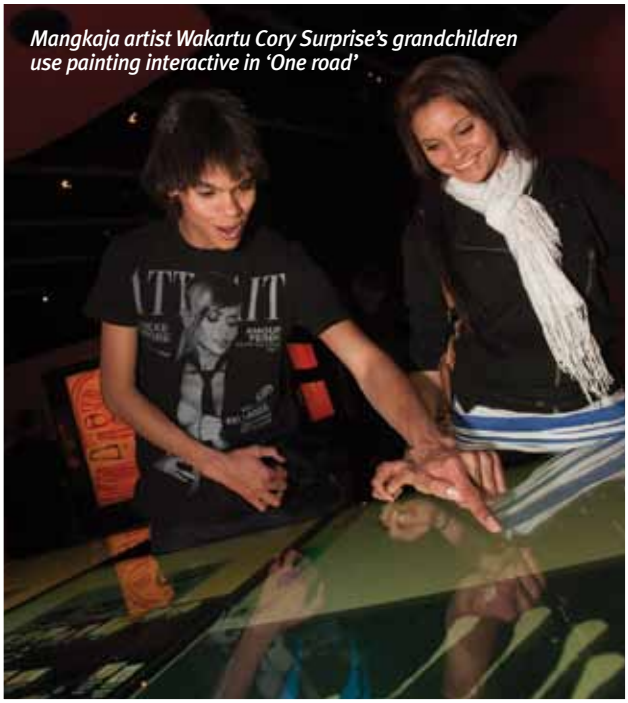
technology



Curtis Taylor talking about use of new technologies in regional communities

The multi-touch interactivity of 'One road' also makes it an especially powerful tool for educating kids. Curtis compares the influence that missionaries historically had on Aboriginal children to the seductive appeals of technology today, and its ability to shape the thinking of younger generations.

When the missionaries came out they went straight for the kids. The old people had their minds made up already [so the missionaries] went straight for the kids to change that next generation. [In this exhibition] the young kids are going to go straight to something they want to interact with. They want to touch it, they want to feel it, they want something they can see move, something that's going to talk back to them. That's what we're doing here … We're using the newest technology with the oldest culture. Curtis Taylor



Mangkaja artist Wakartu Cory Surprise's grandchildren use painting interactive in 'One road'

below: Birriliburru artists see their stories in 'One road' for the first time

What's perhaps most surprising about 'One road', however, is that adults are finding it just as 'enchanting' as the kids. Despite the extraordinary breadth and depth of information in 'One road', the experience is a playful rather than overwhelming one. The state of the art multi-touch technology allows people to engage with the content in such a way that the nature — but not the quality — of their experience is dictated by the extent of their interest. Visitors can skim through information, linger on beautiful elements, rotate their view, move backwards and forwards, dig down into layers, play with interactive surface features, and jump around between multiple kinds of content at the touch of a finger.

For Curtis, these new technologies enable Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to connect and share information in ways that will promote greater understanding. 'One road' is built around Aboriginal knowledge of Country and from Aboriginal perspectives of history, with contributors controlling the information made public. For visitors, the opportunity to interact with these stories is limited only by the extent of their curiosity, and 'One road' rewards those who are keen to discover more.

I think that ['One road'] is showing the way in bridging the gap in distance … Even though we're away from town all that distance, we can still talk, same time, and share knowledge … We put this story for you to read or listen to it but it's up to you. We're not forcing you. If you want to take it home with you, take it home with you. But you'll always have that thing where you're thinking about it after … Curtis Taylor

Monique La Fontaine *Co-curator and* **Curtis Taylor** *Filmmaker,*
Yiwarra Kuju – The Canning Stock Route exhibition

Big journey from the bush to the capital

Artists celebrate the opening of *Yiwarra Kuju: The Canning Stock Route* exhibition

(front to back) Mulyatingki Marney, Rosie Goodjie, Bugai Whylouter and Elizabeth Nyumi perform on opening night

The recent journey made by artists from the distant collection of Western Desert communities to the capital was in many ways akin to our original trip along the Canning Stock Route in 2007. Epic!

All art centre partners of *Yiwarra Kuju — The Canning Stock Route* were represented at the spectacular launch and associated public programs throughout the last week of July. Fifty-four artists, five art centre managers, 12 volunteer support crew and six co-curators and multimedia mob travelled from remote regions to join FORM and National Museum teams. Together they shared the stories of Country, history, Aboriginal culture and connection, as embodied by the exhibition.

Artists wore bright pink, orange and ochre *Yiwarra Kuju* beanies, which could be seen spotted and dotted throughout the Museum. A highlight of the opening week was the artists' private preview, when the contributors themselves were able to see the full exhibition for the first time. This coming together of artists illuminated the 'family story' that is at the nucleus of the exhibition. As artists re-acquainted themselves with their paintings and their stories, they also interacted with each other and with the art and stories that describe the extraordinary relationships across the desert. In addition to the sounds of multimedia audio, an undulation of artists' voices: giggling, screeching with laughter and singing could be heard across the space. Others quietly gazed at their work, stretched and illuminated with a light that enhanced the iridescent power of their raw brush marks. Others still, sat mesmerised viewing the multiple films in which they and their peers star.

This pride, generosity and warmth carried through to opening night and into the public programs. The exhibition launch was electric with collective excitement! After the official speeches, the artists made a long line, walking and sweeping the way clear with eucalyptus branches, to welcome in the audiences. For a couple of magical minutes a 'conga' line naturally formed around the perimeter, and artists proudly sang to their exhibition like a choir in single file before the several hundred guests ventured inside. Over the next few days, there was a program of artists' talks, films and performances that offered a different version of Australian history, giving audiences the chance to hear these insights directly from the artists themselves.

For the artists and the FORM team there were so many highlights of that frenetic and dynamic week. On the last afternoon, all the artists gathered together for the final time at the National Museum. Here, desert men and women talked of their Country and their connections and of their pride in being a part of the telling of *Yiwarra Kuju*. At the end of the many speeches, thanks and acknowledgements, Hayley Atkins from Martumili Artists and one of the exhibition's co-curators presented Dr. Michael Pickering with a jar of red sand, from tali (sand dunes) at Well 33, in the heart of Canning Stock Route country. The exhibition truly had brought the desert to Canberra.

Malcolm Uhl, Justin Andrews, Japeth Rangie and Tommy May dancing Kurtal, as part of the 'One road' Festival launching the exhibition Yiwarra Kuju: The Canning Stock Route *at the National Museum of Australia*

Birriliburu artist Vera Anderson from Wiluna, who is in the introductory film screen welcoming visitors to Country, was very impressed by her trip to Canberra, saying: 'I especially like all the layering of story, maps and histories. The Aboriginal story of the Canning Stock Route has been told now'.

After journeying with the Project Team for four years, FORM wishes to thank all of the artists, art centres and their communities for their incredible participation and effort and for sharing with us the magic of *Yiwarra Kuju*. Martumili Artists (Newman, Parnngurr, Jigalong, Punmu and Kunawarritji), Mangkaja Arts and Ngurra Artists (Fitzroy Crossing and Ngumpan), Yulparija Artists (Bidyadanga), Birriliburu Artists (Wiluna), Warlayirti Artists (Mulan and Balgo), Paruku Indigenous Protection Authority (Mulan), Kayili Artists (Patjarr) and Papunya Tula Artists (Kiwirrkurra).

We are grateful to all the staff at the National Museum for their tremendous work in helping us to build this exhibition and for their recognition of the extraordinary cultural wealth of *Ngurra Kuju Walyja* (One Country, One People) The Canning Stock Route Project, from which *Yiwarra Kuju* grew. The National Museum's collaborative energies, commitment and passion to assist the many stakeholders from Western Australia, has been instrumental in telling a truly remarkable Australian story.

Carly Davenport *FORM Project Manager and Co-curator* Yiwarra Kuju

Developing the eye

A workshop on collecting, exhibiting and interpreting Aboriginal art

On 2 August 2010, just days after the opening of *Yiwarra Kuju: The Canning Stock Route* a capacity audience crowded into the National Museum's Bunyip-Biami Rooms to hear the FORM curators, and a range of other speakers, talk about their experiences in collecting, exhibiting and interpreting Aboriginal art. The workshop was held in conjunction with the ANU's Institute for Professional Practice in Heritage and the Arts (IPPHA).

Convened by Wally Caruana, former curator of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Collection at the National Gallery of Australia, and now an independent curator committed to making Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art accessible to broad audiences, the workshop comprised three sessions: Collecting and collections — collecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art in different situations; Exhibitions — three types of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art exhibition; and Interpretive strategies — what interpretive strategies and tools have proven to be most effective in the art environment? Workshop attendees also toured the *Yiwarra Kuju* exhibition with the FORM curators.

After welcomes from National Museum Director Andrew Sayers, AM, and Ngambri elder Matilda House, the first session on collecting art featured presentations by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program Head, Michael Pickering, FORM curators Carly Davenport and John Carty, and private collector Colin Laverty.

Interesting differences between collecting for museums and for private reasons emerged in this session. Stories and meanings of works of art are highlighted by museums, while private collectors place higher priority on their personal response to the works.

The second session showcased three different approaches to exhibiting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art. Georges Petitjean, curator of the only museum in Europe entirely dedicated to contemporary Australian Aboriginal art, the Museum of Contemporary Aboriginal Art at Utrecht in the Netherlands, demonstrated his approach to exhibiting Aboriginal works of art. Dr Louise Hamby talked about developing her fibre arts exhibition, *Twined Together*; and Djon Mundine, OAM, reflected on his long experience of curating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art exhibitions and working with communities.

The final session was designed to maximise audience interactivity. It featured a panel comprising the FORM curators, along with Margo Neale, the Museum's Principal Advisor to the Director on Indigenous projects, and Franchesca Cubillo, Senior Curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art, National Gallery of Australia. Panel members took questions and comments from audience members, and shared their own perspectives and experiences. Wally Caruana and Michael Pickering then summed up the day of debate and discussion, and exposure to new perspectives from a diversity of speakers and commentators.

Roslyn Russell *Public Programs and Marketing*

Terry Murray

Franchesca Cubillo

Wally Caruana

(left to right) Curtis Taylor, Terry Murray and Carly Davenport

‘Unsung Heroes’

NAIDOC on the Peninsula and ‘One road’ Festival

Duncan Smith from the Wiradjuri Echoes

Photo: Damian McDonald

A sparkling winter’s day on Sunday 4 July attracted a great crowd to the NAIDOC on the Peninsula family festival, an annual event hosted by the National Museum of Australia and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander Studies (AIATSIS).

A variety of activities and entertainment inside the Museum were enjoyed by more than 1200 visitors while outside, AIATSIS festivities included over 40 stallholders, giveaways, live music and kids’ rides.

The Discovery Space in the Hall greeted visitors with inspiring fibre basket making demonstrations by artists Colleen Mundy and Vicki West who travelled from Tasmania especially for the event. Adults and children enjoyed watching these two very skilled women in action, weaving seaweed and other fibres. Visitors were able to make their own colourful fibre basket masterpieces using raffia, wool and ribbon.

Also in the Discovery Space, children made small air-dry clay animal sculptures with award winning ceramic artist and teacher Janet Fieldhouse who was accompanied by one of her students Hayley Hoolihan. Terrific creations resulted, with some inventive children also using feathers, pipe cleaners and fibre to decorate their animals.

Meanwhile on the main stage, storyteller Larry Brandy entertained the little ones with his songs, toys, artefacts and stories. Duncan Smith and the Wiradjuri Echoes contributed to the great atmosphere with lively dancing, storytelling and didj performances. A highlight of the show was Duncan inviting the audience to form a large rainbow serpent which then wrapped its way around the Hall.

The annual didj competition, hosted by Warren Saunders, attracted a strong field of young and older male didj players. Warren gave a

Photo: Damian McDonald

Colleen Mundy with some of her fibre creations

Photo: Damian McDonald

A happy participant with her face painted by the Wiradjuri Echoes

Photo: Kellie Robson

(left) Janet Fieldhouse and (right) Hayley Hoolihan

Photo: Kellie Robson

An air-dry clay wombat and woven basket

great introduction to playing the didj and facilitated a tightly fought contest. The overall winner and crowd favourite was Duncan Smith who received a signed certificate from Museum Director Andrew Sayers for his efforts. Other prizes were awarded for best decorated didj and the best young and adult player. Any didj players out there are encouraged to start practising for next year's contest.

On Saturday 31 July, following the celebrated launch of *Yiwarra Kuju: The Canning Stock Route* exhibition, the 'One road' festival was another exciting event that was held at the Museum. Over 50 artists featured in the exhibition, who travelled to Canberra from the Western Desert for the opening, also participated in the day's events.

The Discovery Space again hosted a number of activities for children and adults. Participants contributed to a large 10-metre canvas where they were invited to paint their own country or special place, inspired by the colours, textures and stories of the artworks in the exhibition. Some of the artists from the exhibition joined in by painting their own segment on the shared canvas. Visitors were able to draw and paint their own small canvas to take home.

In addition to the Discovery Space activities, the 'One road' Festival also included short film screenings, artist talks in the exhibition space and a dance performance which made for a packed day of activities. To the delight of visitors, an unexpected treat occurred in the Hall where artists participating in the dancing prepared ceremonial headdresses and painted up in readiness for their much anticipated performance. This was a wonderful and moving insight for the crowd into these cultural traditions.

The spring family festival at the Museum was held on 27 September, the ACT Family and Community Day public holiday. The theme of the festival was 'Into the Unknown', based on the *Exploration and Endeavour: The Royal Society of London and the South Seas* exhibition. The National Museum of Australia was proud to host the URAB dancers from Poruma Island in the Torres Strait amongst other activities. The summer holidays in January 2011 will provide a packed program of exciting activities inspired by the themes of *Yiwarra Kuju: The Canning Stock Route* exhibition which will by then be in its closing days.

Kellie Robson *Senior Coordinator, Family Programs*

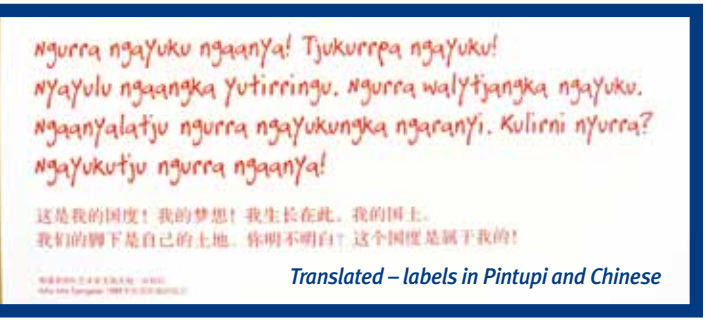
Papunya goes to China

Photo: Poppy Wenham

The Museum team in China

Installing works is a team effort

Photo: Michael Pickering



Translated – labels in Pintupi and Chinese

Photo: Adria Hu

Poppy and the Museum team reviewing the unpack and install plans

Photo: Michael Pickering

In 2008 the National Museum of Australia presented a major exhibition entitled *Papunya Painting: Out of the Desert*. The exhibition later travelled to the Australian Museum in Sydney. It was a great success attracting both a large number of visitors and positive critique.

In February this year the Museum was approached by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade with a query of whether we might have an exhibition that could travel to Beijing in China as part of the Imagine Australia: Year of Australian Culture in China program. Specifically they requested an exhibition of Aboriginal culture, a subject that the Chinese were extremely interested in.

The Papunya exhibition immediately presented itself as an appropriate exhibition. It not only contained highly significant and beautiful artworks, it also provided a wealth of cultural and historical information. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade were impressed and so were the Chinese hosts at the National Art Museum of China. This was exactly what they wanted. And so agreements were made and the exhibition was travelling. All that was required was to put it back together, package it and send it off.

And that's where the fun began. We had a four month lead-up time in which to review the content of the exhibition, prepare the works, prepare a design suited to the venue in China, build the exhibition furniture and ship it to China and, most importantly, to translate the content into Chinese! Then it was off to Beijing for the installation team, who managed to install a complete exhibition in only 10 days. On 9 June the exhibition, slightly retitled as *Papunya Painting: Out of the Australian Desert*, along with a companion exhibition entitled *Balgo: Contemporary Australian Art from the Balgo Hills*, was launched by dignitaries including Ms Quentin Bryce, Australia's Governor-General, Mr Fan Di'an, Director of the National Art Museum of China, and Andrew Sayers, Director of the National Museum of Australia. Performances at the launch included didjeridu virtuoso William Barton and dancers Deborah Brown and Leonard Mickelo from Bangarra Dance Theatre completed the scene.

The response from Chinese audiences was fantastic. The first inkling of what interest could be expected was when the first text panels were installed. The security guards, who for the most part had been quietly, politely, and patiently seated in each gallery while the work of installation went on, immediately jumped to their feet to read the text and graphic panels. The volunteer guides stretched a two-hour familiarisation tour into a three-hour session with hundreds of questions relating to Aboriginal art, cultures and histories.

This enthusiasm continued over the next 10 weeks as 170,000 visitors viewed the exhibition. Then it was back to China for the de-installation team.

The success of the exhibition here and in China indicates a desire by audiences to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. They visit our exhibitions not just to view art, but to enquire about the lives, histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is these stories that make the difference.

Michael Pickering *Head, ATSIP*

Aboriginal treasures in the Vatican

The Museum goes to Rome

Paul Miuron known as 'big Paul' pictured with clap sticks leading the performers (taken from moving footage), 1960's Pago Catholic Mission — near current day Kalumburu

Photo: Peter Lucich, AIAS

Father Mapelli with Lydia Burak and Mary Elizabeth Moreen at Melville Island

Photo: Katherine Aigner

The art centre — Bathurst Island's own 'Sistine chapel'

Photo: Katherine Aigner

One associates the treasures of the Vatican with the works of Michelangelo, Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci or ancient Roman tablets but not with Australian Aboriginal artefacts.

Who would have thought that amongst the treasures lying in the vaults of the Vatican are century-old objects of Aboriginal material culture. Beautifully preserved, they lie dormant in their plastic wraps like cocoons awaiting their restoration.

Such a moment arrived in May 2010, when curatorial assistant Katherine Aigner and I visited the storerooms at the invitation of Father Mapelli, the visionary new Director of the Vatican Ethnological Museum, beginning a process that will see the collection transported from the past into the present. At the Museum we see it as our mission to assist Aboriginal communities to reconnect with 'lost' overseas collections in various ways, so we took Father Mapelli on the first of a number of journeys to source communities to start this process.

Such is the power of Aboriginal oral history-telling that even after almost 100 years we were able to locate relatives of those who made a number of the objects held in the collection. Some remembered the makers, while others identified works as being made by their fathers or uncles, and all were proud that the works 'were with the Pope in Rome' near the Sistine Chapel. Pedro Wonaeamimirri from the Milikapiti community (Tiwi Islands) spoke of the objects as cultural ambassadors, 'We want to reach out to the world and show people our great culture ...'. An achievable goal given that the Vatican museums are the most visited in the world.

How and why these objects were created and how they found their way to the Vatican is a little known and fascinating part of our national story, to be explored over the coming years. In the 1920s Pope Pius XI put out a call to Catholic missions worldwide, inviting Aboriginal peoples to send objects they thought represented their cultures for an exhibition to be held in the Vatican. Material was sent from missions in Africa, Asia, the Americas and Oceania, including some 300 Aboriginal objects from the western and northern parts of Australia. The 1925 exhibition was an arresting spectacle of over 100,000 pieces displayed across 24 rooms within the Vatican. After the exhibition 40,000 pieces were kept, to form the core of the current 100,000-strong ethnological holdings.

Research suggests these objects were created and donated by Aboriginal Catholics for their 'Papa' in Rome, and they embody a strong devotional dimension. This is evident in the quality of the workmanship and some unusual works such as a series of small paintings on slate (painted both sides) which are described as a song cycle, yet their episodic progression over 14 works recalls the 'stations of the cross'. Dating from the late 19th century to 1920 the collection comes mainly from communities in the Tiwi Islands, Kalumburu in the north Kimberley and New Norcia near Perth.

Unlike many collections of this period, these works were not collected by ethnologists motivated by a 'salvage mentality' — a belief that the Aboriginal culture was dying out — but rather as signs of a thriving cultures. They are valued for their significant spiritual, artistic and ceremonial qualities. Notably, there are no human remains, as we see in other collections of this period.

It is rare to have an individual's name on collections this old. However we found the family of the artist who painted the song cycle, Paul Miuron. By telling stories about him and reliving his life through images of his work and archival footage his community felt that '... he was brought back to life for them'.

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

100 objects were exhibited on permanent display in the Vatican's Ethnological Museum to coincide with the canonisation of Mary MacKillop in October 2010.

Celebrating football in Australia

Photo: David Callow

Charles Perkins (right) and Johnny Warren in their Canberra City Football Club uniforms, 1986

Display showing shirt worn by Tahj Minniecon in 2009 (signed by fellow team members) and shirt worn by Harry Williams in 1974

It was hard to miss the fact that Australia was competing in the FIFA World Cup in July this year. However, I wonder how many Aussies who tuned into the World Cup know that when Australia first qualified for the competition back in 1974, an Indigenous man played on the team?

Harry Williams was selected to play for the Socceroos and went to Germany with the team. He was the first Indigenous person to play football for Australia. He also played professional football for St-George Budapest and Canberra City. Today he coaches and mentors young players and participates in coaching clinics as part of the Football NSW Harry Williams Indigenous Talent Identification Program. Williams graciously loaned his T-shirt from the 1974 World Cup to the National Museum for a recent display in the Museum's Hall.

I Told You So: Johnny Warren and Football in Australia was on display from 15 May until 9 August 2010. Johnny Warren was a captain, coach, commentator and champion of football in Australia. In the 50 years that Warren was associated with the game, it evolved into a mainstream, international sport. Football is now a part of Australia's national sporting identity. As Johnny Warren once said: 'I told you so'.

Over the years Australian football has seen a number of talented Indigenous players grace the game. Included among them are Travis Dodd, captain of Adelaide United; Kyah Simon, winner of the Young Footballer of the Year award in 2008 and a member of the Young Matildas under-20s team; and Tahj Minniecon who represented Australia in the FIFA under-20s World Cup in Egypt.

Johnny Warren and Aboriginal activist, lawyer and footballer Charles Perkins were good mates and helped to establish the Canberra City Football Club in early 1977. Perkins was president and Warren was the coach-manager of the club. Charles Perkins played football in Australia and England and was vice-president of the Australian Soccer Federation in 1987. He supported his university studies with his earnings from professional football.

Indigenous people played ball games similar to football and Australian Rules long before the arrival of Europeans. Balls were sometimes made from twisted possum hair or a stuffed possum skin sewn with kangaroo sinew. Today Football Federation Australia is fostering a love of football amongst young Indigenous people. In 2009 they held the inaugural 'Outback United' Indigenous football festival in Townsville. In 2010 it was held in Alice Springs. This is part of a 10-year program to encourage more Indigenous people to play football, thereby improving their health, education and social skills.

Alison Wishart *Curator, Collections and Content*

tayenebe leaves for Brisbane and other venues

Sadly, with the end of July came the demounting of the wonderful *tayenebe: Tasmanian Aboriginal Women's Fibre Work* exhibition. I've loved having the show at the Museum and seeing people poring over the works, and talking intently about techniques.

The exhibition was supported with demonstrations by Colleen Mundy and Vicky West, who also brought beautiful examples of work they'd been preparing for future exhibitions. Perhaps Canberra is a town of weavers, for some really serious weavers came to watch, as well as hundreds of children visiting the Museum for a family day.

It was an eye-opening experience for everyone to see work in progress, learn about the different fibres and, in particular, to touch the unfamiliar kelp samples. Between them, Colleen and Vicky showed techniques in grasses and kelp, in contemporary mixed media and in more traditional weaving styles. The day was busy but Colleen and Vicki still found time to record an early interview at the local ABC Radio studios, where they talked passionately about their part in the *tayenebe* project and what visitors could expect to see at the Museum.

The *tayenebe* exhibition was the culmination of a three year project involving over 30 women who concentrated on reviving past weaving skills. They also carried out an audit of the available grasses and fibres across Tasmania that were used by the ancestors, as well as learning what new fibres would lend themselves to newer styles of weaving.

Although the National Museum is losing the exhibition, people in Brisbane are the ones to gain, for *tayenebe* opened at the Queensland Museum at the end of August and will be on show till the end of November.

From there it travels to three more venues during 2011 — Sydney at the Australian National Maritime Museum, Melbourne at the Koorie Heritage Trust and Adelaide at the Flinders University City Gallery.

Andy Greenslade *Curator, ATSIP*

Photo: Lorna Woodcock

(above) Colleen Mundy talking with visitor to the Museum

(Left) Lola Greeno, Julie Gough and Alison Page

(below) Visitors to the Museum

Everyday heroes

It's wonderful to know these extraordinary people are a part of our everyday society.

Aunty Alice Jackson, Gungari elder

Everyday heroes was a small exhibit in the Hall. It was part of the Museum's NAIDOC program celebrating this year's theme 'Unsung Heroes'. The exhibit recognises two very specific aspects of contemporary Aboriginal culture — stockmen and didjeridu players. Stockmen and women in the pastoral industry demonstrate extraordinary skills and daring during their working lives, while many didj players are cultural advisors and cross-cultural liaisons as well as musicians. These are also two examples of where First Australians use, adapt and continue cultural knowledge within their everyday lives.

Australian stockmen perform extraordinary feats in moments of high action. Their stories are of courage, danger, and excitement — horse riding, bronco bucking, droving with helicopters, rounding up lost cattle while riding motorbikes over wild terrain and 'Bucking Bull' riding. To do these things you have to be tough, quick and smart.

It's real dangerous trying to stay on a half ton muscled animal bounding and leaping trying to get you off.

Uncle Herb Wharton, Kooma elder

A selection of 'bush toys' from the Liesl Rockchild collection held by the Museum were displayed along with images of professional bull rider John Pluto Jr riding 'India Jo' at the Melbourne International Rodeo (2005), the Doomagee Rodeo (2008) and an image of life on Merapah station (1995) to illustrate some of the skills demonstrated by stockmen. The toys were made from salvaged materials by people from two Eastern Arrernte communities from Central Australia — Ltyentye Apurte (Santa Teresa Mission) and Titjikala (Maryvale Station). The toys represent aspects of their stories and activities in the life as stockmen.

The second half of the exhibit featured the didjeridu,which is uniquely Australian and one of the most intriguing wind instruments. 'Circular breathing' is a necessary skill requiring players to breathe in and blow out at the same time while actively making sounds which echo through the instrument. Didjeridu players are highly regarded within Aboriginal communities and around the world. William Barton plays with international symphony orchestras while others, like the late Alan Dargin, worked with rock and jazz musicians.

One Brotha plays bird calls, another Brotha plays rhythms of the city.

Phil Yubbagurri Brown, Birri Gubba

Phil Yubbagurri Brown, who plays traditional songs, has been the driving force of the annual 'Didj Comp' held at the Museum since 2005. Phil kindly made a didj especially for this exhibit and for visitors to touch. This was to encourage visitors towards learning more about the instrument by becoming familiar with the sound and textures of the didjeridu.

I own a few didjs 'cause they each play in a different key.

William Barton, Kalkadunga

Through the exhibit visitors learnt there are different names and customs associated with the didjeridu. Other common names are *wuyimba, djibolu, yidaki* and *gumbark*. In some communities both men and women play the didjeridu, in others only men play. Didjeridus are commonly made from hardwoods, usually a young tree trunk or long branch which has been eaten out by termites. Beeswax or resin is applied around the mouth area for the player's comfort. The decorations on the instrument usually reflect the maker's cultural background or personal story. There are so many reasons why this instrument is intriguing and some of the nation's well-known players are well regarded.

Barbara Paulson *Curator, ATSIP*

Seaman Dan and Andy Greenslade listen to Dr Karl Neuenfeldt telling a good yarn

Photo: Pip McNaught

Seaman Dan sings at Cairns Indigenous Art Fair

Needing a bit of air, I stepped out of the very warm Tank — one of the old fuel oil tanks originally built for naval use during the Second World War, but more recently the home of the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair.

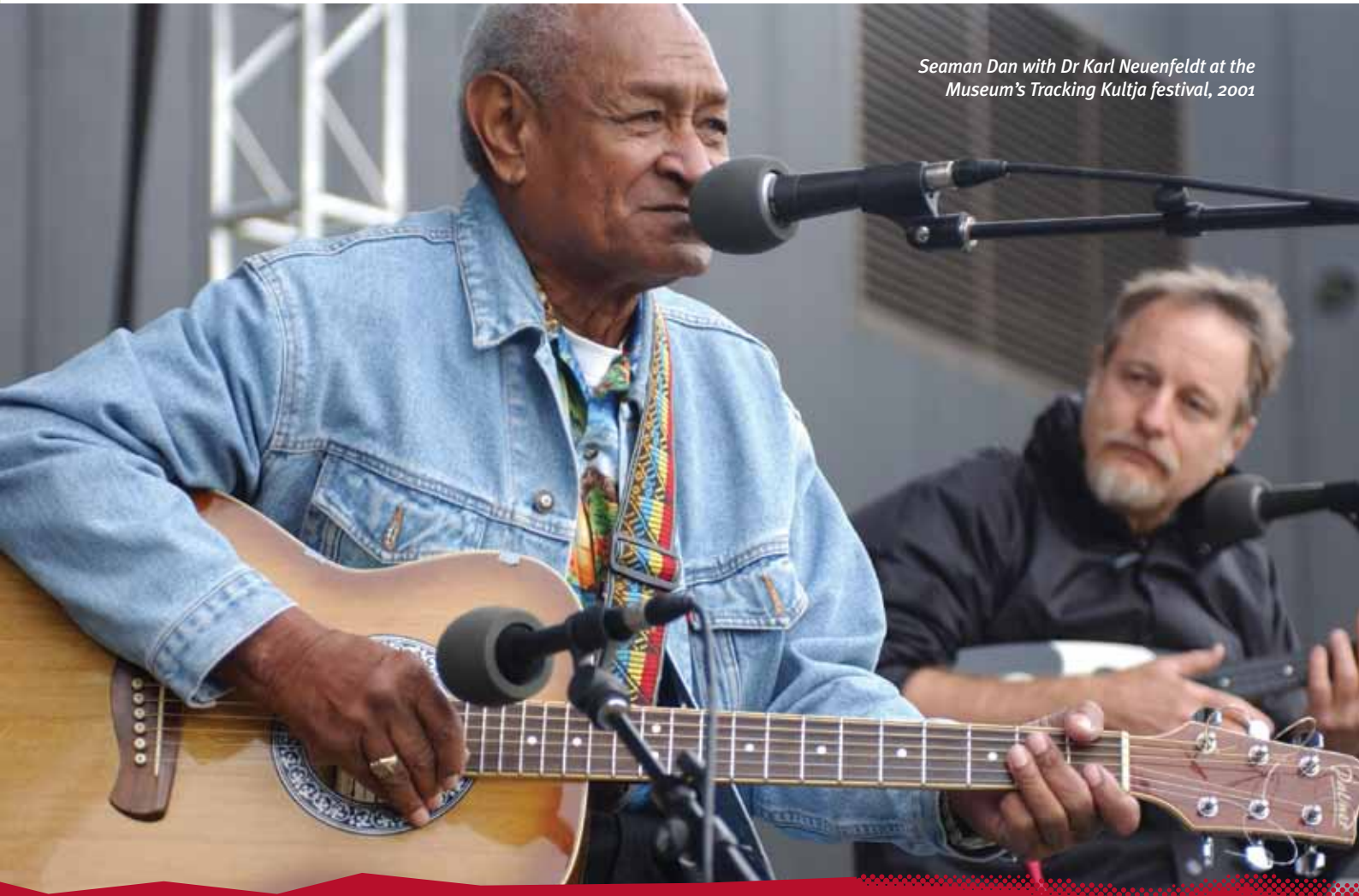
Before long the familiar, mellow voice of Henry Seaman Dan came wafting over the trees — the voice of a man I haven't heard in a live performance for quite a few years. Nor did I expect to, for Seaman Dan announced his retirement from his recording career in 2008.

Following a nasty bout of pneumonia, which kept him in hospital for many months, Seaman Dan has since recovered his voice. In fact, Seaman Dan accords his present health to a big team of doctors and physios. And if his voice was anything to go by, they did a great job.

Seaman Dan came to perform at the National Museum in 2001 during the Tracking Kultja festival, where he proved to be a real favourite. We heard his wonderful repertoire of music and listened to his stories of the early days, how he came to sing the blues and about his work on the pearling luggers. He told us of how he got to dive for pearl shell in the Darnley Deep, and about the time when he let impatience bring him to surface too quickly. Without proper staging in his rise, he developed 'the bends', or decompression sickness. No wonder he developed the motto 'steady, steady'.

A couple of days after his appearance at the art fair concert, I was able to talk to Seaman Dan and to catch up on what his music has meant to him and the people of the Torres Strait. Ever the humble man, he preferred to concentrate on what he has been learning from others. One of his grandchildren is a keen musician and Seaman Dan has taken from him the rap beat, '... slower, you know, but I use the same beat. It's a very good beat'. He did, however, admit that the proudest moment in his music career was winning his first Aria Award in 2004, with another following in 2009. A great achievement at any age!

Andy Greenslade *Curator, ATSIP*



Seaman Dan with Dr Karl Neuenfeldt at the Museum's Tracking Kultja festival, 2001

Sharing inspirational stories about their journeys to the Museum is Kristy smith, Lorna Woodcock and Jenna Greatorex

In June, this year 100 Indigenous year 10–12 students from across Australia visited the National Museum of Australia as part of a government initiative through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' Learn, Earn, Legend! program. This program aims to encourage young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to stay in school and provides them with the opportunity to taste a wide variety of government careers.

The students had a wonderful and informative time here at the Museum. Their visit started with an informal chat with five of our seven Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Visitor Services Hosts. Three of the hosts, Lorna Woodcock, Kristy Smith and Jenna Greatorex, young Indigenous women themselves, shared their stories of working in the Visitor Services team. Lorna came into the Museum through the Visitor Services Team Indigenous work experience program and now has a position with the Museum as an APS Indigenous Cadet. Lorna talked about her experience coming to the Museum as a work experience student. Kristy came into the position as Visitor Services Host through a temporary contract and has won a full time permanent position. She shared the story of how she got a job here when she was unable to find employment in her home town of Wollongong. Jenna originally joined the APS through the APS Indigenous Graduate program and has since gained a permanent position through the Visitor Services and Volunteers Business Unit's recruitment program as a Visitor Services Host. Jenna, originally from Broome, as were many of the visiting students, talked openly about her experience of coming from Broome to Canberra and working at the Museum.

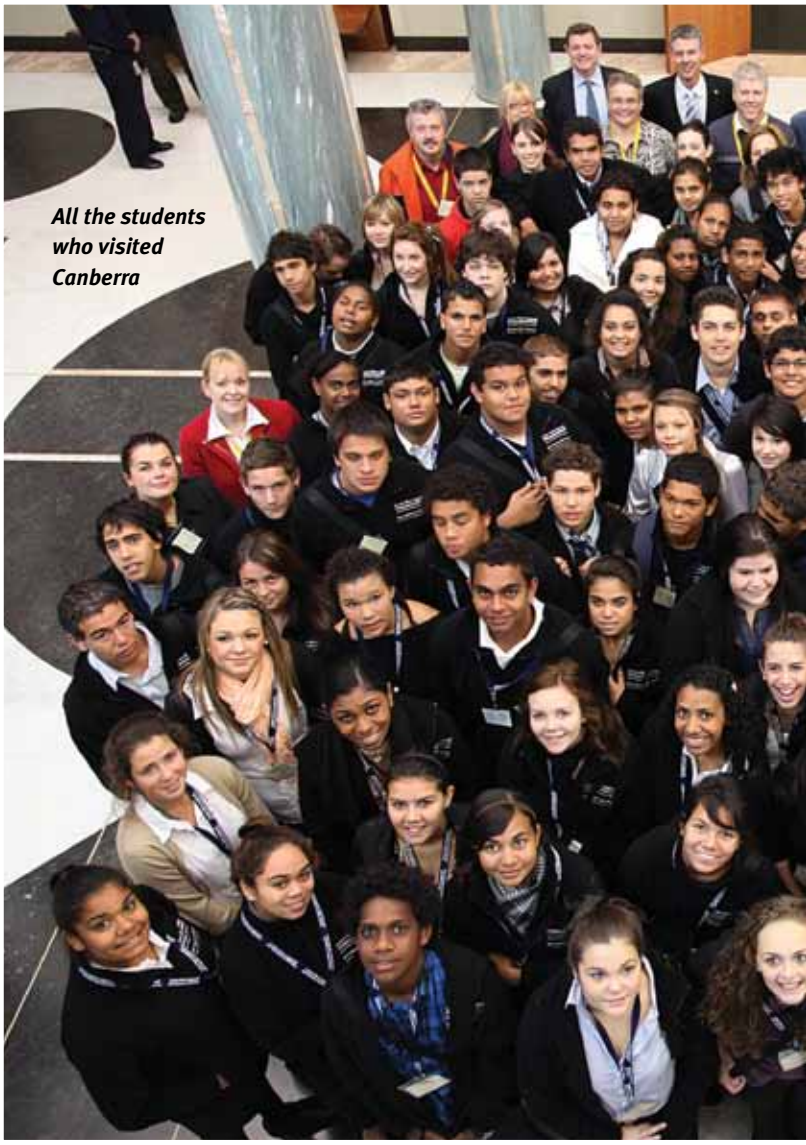
'The students were spellbound listening to the personal stories of the guides as I was myself'

Cynthia Shannon

The young students were completely absorbed in the sharing of stories and during the tour some commented to the girls that they would love to work in the Museum. The tours after the talk were taken by Visitor Services Hosts Kristy, Lorna, Helen Tiernan and Simon Goode. Their aim was to give the students a more 'grass roots' tour of the Museum. They also realised that the students had had a busy week full of the formal side of government which included being at Parliament House the day Julia Gillard became Prime Minister. So we tailored a tour suit them as a more relaxed and entertaining experience. The talks and tour were a great success all round and support the National Museum's commitment to the employment of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Mikki Campbell *Team Support Officer Indigenous Recruitment and Volunteers, Visitor Services and Volunteers*

Learn Earn Legend!



All the students who visited Canberra

In June, students from rural and remote locations across Australia participated in the Canberra based Learn Earn Legend! — work experience with government program. Part of the program included visiting the Museum's Gallery of First Australians, Kspace and Circa theatre as well as meeting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members. The program is an initiative of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, who in partnership with 'Dare to Lead' and the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation provided 100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with the opportunity to gain experience and insight into employment opportunities within government and the Australian Public Service.

The students were selected from rural and remote locations across Australia and brought to Canberra based on their academic and career aspirations. Students came from communities such as Broome, Weipa, Gapuwiyak, Cairns, Bamaga and islands in the Torres Strait. All students were in Years 10, 11 or 12 at school and ranged in age from 14 to 18 years old.

Work experience with government

Students at AIATSIS looking over image files used in research

Dale Dhamarrandji testing the grinding stone in the Gallery of First Australians

The visit to Canberra enabled the students to get a sense of the wide scope of employment opportunities available in the Australian Public Service, not only in Canberra but across the country. They experienced a day in the life of a parliamentarian in Parliament House and that of a public servant in an Australian Government department — the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts.

The students showed a special interest in the Gallery of First Australians; the largest exhibition space in the Museum. The stories within this gallery are told from the point of view of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from around Australia. The students felt a connection with the upper level of the gallery and the Torres Strait Island Gallery which features an array of exhibitions about specific communities which students were able to identify as representing their 'home' communities. It was also a proud moment as they realised that their culture is represented on a national level and available for other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the wider Australian communities and international tourists to view.

A highlight of the visit was meeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members who shared their experiences. This gave students the opportunity to ask more personal questions and find out about the more intricate aspects of working at the Museum or in a similar field. The students walked away with a new-found confidence and belief that they could achieve their dreams as well.

For many of these students the visit to the Museum opened their eyes to Australia's extensive history. It also showed them the employment opportunities that are available in the area of arts, culture and history. Students left feeling motivated and inspired to carry on the value of identifying and conserving their local history for future generations.

Jessica O'Brien *Demonstration Projects Officer*
Indigenous Economic Strategy Group
Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Photo: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

The life and tragic death of Louis St John Johnson

(left) School photo of Louis, aged 8

(right) Louis with his pet dog

The National Museum of Australia has recently installed an exhibit in its Eternity gallery featuring the story of Louis St John Johnson.

Louis was born Warren Braeden in Alice Springs in 1973. He was taken from his Aboriginal mother as a baby and adopted out to Bill and Pauline Johnson. They were told he'd been abandoned, but this was not true.

Louis was raised in Perth and was a happy child, but as he grew older he became the target of increasing levels of racial harassment. At high school a group of boys took to calling him derogatory names and an older nun once called him the 'worst type of native' [1]. He was also harassed by police, on one occasion being accused of breaking into his own home and having to point to family photos on the wall to prove his innocence.

Louis felt increasingly isolated and alone, and developed a longing to find his natural family and to meet his birth mother. With the support of his adopted parents, he returned to Alice Springs as a 14-year-old, but the authorities refused to give him any information about his mother or family.

In the early 1990s some sections of the Perth media began campaigning for tougher penalties for juvenile offenders, especially car thieves, arguing that youth crime was out of control and that the justice system was too lenient. When three Aboriginal youths were killed in a high speed police car chase, one Perth radio announcer remarked 'good riddance to bad rubbish' [3]. It was in this climate of hysteria that Louis was assaulted outside a city café while sitting and talking to a couple of white girls, his attackers taking offence at such behaviour. Louis told his dad 'it's just not safe to be out on the streets anymore'. This was Perth in 1991.

A few weeks later Louis was walking home from a party on his 19th birthday when a car full of strangers pulled up. In the early hours of Saturday 4 January, these strangers bashed and then dragged Louis' body on to the road, before deliberately running him over. When asked by police later why they did it, the driver replied 'because he was black' [1]. Although this brutal attack was committed by a group of youths, it was not given coverage by the local media as an example of out of control youth crime [2]. It simply did not fit the stereotype of young black criminals perpetrating crimes against innocent white victims [1].

A few hours later a passer-by came across Louis' body and called an ambulance, but when it arrived the ambulance attendants assumed Louis had been sniffing petrol and took him home to sleep rather than to hospital for the urgent medical attention he obviously required [1]. They made him walk up the stairs of his home with a shattered pelvis, perforated bowel, broken ribs and a punctured lung, put him on his bed, and told his sister he would sleep it off. Louis died a few hours later.

Following his death, Bill and Pauline Johnson took Louis' body back to Alice Springs and after threatening to call a press conference over his dead body, were finally given details of Louis' natural family. The funeral was attended by Louis' natural mother and grandfather as well as about 100 members of the local community. When Louis' birth mother Dawna died in 2006, she was buried next to her son. In death, Louis was finally reunited with his mother and country.

Stephen Munro *Curator, Eternity Gallery*

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[1] A Haebich, *Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800–2000*. Fremantle Arts Centre Press: Fremantle, 2000.

[2] C Stockwell 'The Role of the Media in the Juvenile Justice Debate in Western Australia' National Conference on Juvenile Justice: Proceedings of a Conference, September 1992. Australian Institute of Criminology: Canberra, 1993, pp. 279–290.

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Photos: Bill and Pauline Johnson

Can You Imagine? (Mum's Story)

Peta Edwards and Dianne Clayton being interviewed by Michael Pickering in front of the 'Losing our children' exhibit

Dianne Clayton and her family

Artist Peta Edwards visited the National Museum of Australia in August to see her artwork *Can You Imagine? (Mum's Story)* on display in the Gallery of First Australians. Her mum, Dianne had told her daughter the heart-wrenching story of how Dianne (aged 3) and her two brothers were taken from their parents, supposedly to a hospital for treatment but really to an orphanage. Dianne then went to a foster family, and though she thought she was part of the family, gradually she realised she was treated differently from the other children and had more chores. That family turned her out when she was 18. She has kept in touch with her brother Maurice but does not know the whereabouts of her brother John.

Encouraged by her art teacher John Bawden, Peta incorporated her mother's story into an artwork as part of her Higher School Certificate in visual arts at Lithgow High School. *Can You Imagine? (Mum's Story)* was exhibited at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and also toured to regional galleries as part of ArtExpress in 2001. The deeply felt artwork was acquired by the National Museum in 2008 (featured in *Goree* in November 2008).

This year Lithgow High School film students are making a documentary about Peta and Dianne. Five students, Cassie, Malithi, Lauchlan, Andy and Mel, with teacher Sean O'Keefe, travelled from Lithgow for a day of filming and interviews with Dianne and Peta at the National Museum. Director of the Gallery of First Australians, Michael Pickering welcomed everyone and participated in the filming by interviewing Peta and Dianne. It was also an opportunity for Peta's children to see her art in the Museum and see the interpretation of their grandma's story.

In the gallery there was joy at seeing the artwork, sadness again at the story of her mum's early years. It is a powerful artwork that illustrates one story of the many from the Stolen Generations. When it was acquired by the Museum, Michael Pickering said 'The events represented in Peta's work are the experiences that shaped our history — the legacy of the Stolen Generations. They remind us that the artefact does not, in itself, make history — history … is made, experienced and told by people'.

The ripples of knowledge from this one artwork go out from one family, to a school, to visitors to an exhibition of student art and now visitors to the National Museum. The documentary being made by the students from Lithgow High School will record the story for new audiences and generations to understand an important aspect of our history.

We wish them well in their assignment and look forward to seeing the finished film.

Pip McNaught *Assistant Curator, ATSIP*

Lithgow Students who are documenting the story

A chance meeting

(left to right) Janet Yates, Norma Giles, Nola Campbell and Chris Yates at the Yiwarra Kuju Festival, July 2010

Chris Yates was only 11 days old when he visited the country of some of the Yiwarra Kuju artists with his mother Janet in 1968. Chris's father had been grading roads for a French mining company who were drilling near Lake Mackay. Scattered smoke had been reported in the area near the mining camp from fires lit by Aboriginal people who had very limited contact with white people.

In 1968, white people had rarely been seen in those parts. Prior to settlement on missions and reserves, Pintupi people had occasional contact with prospectors and patrol officers. But these were invariably men. White women and children were virtually unseen in the desert at this time.

Western Desert people began drifting toward white settlements following the construction of the Canning Stock Route in 1930 and by the mid-1960s, most had been resettled at settlements and missions. In 1962, some Pintupi people saw their first white woman when patrol officer Jeremy Long took his future wife on one of his patrols. By 1968 numbers were dwindling but one group, including women and kids, continued living a nomadic life to the west of Lake Mackay until 1984.

Whilst driving through Lake Mackay in 1968, Janet reported coming across a group of Pintupi women and children who approached them and were interested to see her 'feeding Christopher'. The location of this first contact suggests they were the same group of people who were reunited with their relatives at the remote community of Kiwirrkura in 1984, although some members of this group had passed away.

Chris now works for the National Museum of Australia as a Visitor Services Host. During the festival following the exhibition opening Chris and Janet had an opportunity to meet with some of the *Yiwarra Kuju* artists with whom they shared accounts of 'first contact' in the desert. This remarkable story came to light when the National Museum opened its *Yiwarra Kuju: The Canning Stock Route* exhibition in July this year.

Peter Thorley *Curator, ATSIP*

A boom

What do a boomerang and a helicopter have in common? The obvious answers are: they are both aerodynamic. They are both propelled by rotation. They are both marvels of invention. A lesser known fact is that they are both part of a story featured in the *Yiwarra Kuju* exhibition and in the Gallery of First Australians in the 'Who Are These People?' exhibit.

This story relates to a helicopter pilot named James Ferguson, who went to the Canning Stock Route in 1957 to assist with a mining survey. The survey was based at Well 40 or Natawalu as it was known to the traditional owners, the Kukatja speaking people. At the time, Kukatja people had rarely seen a white man let alone a helicopter.

For one Aboriginal man in particular, the coming of the helicopter was to have a major impact. Yukenbarri

erang and a helicopter

(above) Helicopter Tjungurrayi and Brandy Tjungurrayi with the boomerang collected at Natawalu by James Ferguson, at the National Museum of Australia in July 2010

(left) Kukatja men standing beside James Ferguson's helicopter at Natawalu, 1957

Tjungurrayi, an artist featured in the *Yiwarra Kuju* exhibition, was living with his mother's sister to the east of Natawalu. He was around 10 years old at the time (because Tjungurrayi was born in the desert, his date of birth was not officially recorded. This is true of many artists represented in the *Yiwarra Kuju* exhibition).

Ferguson saw that the pair were suffering and in need of medical attention so he offered to ferry them to hospital in Broome. Afterwards Tjungurrayi went to Balgo Mission where he was given the nickname 'Helicopter'.

Ferguson returned to Natawalu and met with other Kukatja people, including Brandy Tjungurrayi. People were inquisitive about the helicopter thinking it looked like a giant wasp. Near Natawalu, Ferguson came upon a recently abandoned camp where he found spears, boomerangs and other artefacts. He pricked up a boomerang and seeing no one nearby to negotiate with, left a cartridge from his belt in return.

A boomerang of the type collected by Ferguson is sometimes referred to as a 'number seven' or hooked boomerang. Interestingly this type of boomerang was not made traditionally by Kukatja people and was probably obtained by them from long-distance trade with Warlpiri people, whose country lies mainly in the Northern Territory, hundreds of kilometres to the east.

Helicopter and Brandy came to Canberra for the opening of the *Yiwarra Kuju* exhibition where they had the opportunity to view the boomerang collected by James Ferguson. The boomerang can be seen in the Gallery of the First Australians in a new exhibit 'Who Are These People?' about first encounters between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. Helicopter's and Brandy's paintings are on display in the *Yiwarra Kuju* exhibition.

Peter Thorley *Curator, ATSIP*

Alby Clarke's Ride for Reconciliation 2002

The Museum collects and displays material representative of important individuals from their respective fields of achievement, material that illustrates aspects of their identity and how they inspired the nation's 'collective imagination'. In 2002, Albert 'Alby' Clarke rode across the Nullarbor, from Perth to Warrnambool, capturing public attention in what became known as the 'Ride for Reconciliation'. The ride also raised awareness in the public of health issues related to Aboriginal people particularly about 'The Gap' — the gap between Aboriginal peoples' life expectancy (59 years) and Australia's wider communities' life expectancy (77 years). At the age of 66 (in 2002) Clarke had outlived many of his generation and he was concerned about the continued effect on his community. The journey was recorded and photographed and resulted in the exhibition in 2002.

Health is everything. You can enjoy life if you have good health. I see my community and not everyone's health is good. I want to encourage them towards better health.

Alby Clark, 2010

Alby Clarke, a Gunditjmarra man from Warrnambool, has been a professional cyclist since 1950. He is one of a few Aboriginal people to partake in this sport. In 2001, at the age of 66, Clarke became the first Aboriginal to compete in the cycling classic 'Melbourne to Warrnambool'. Riding for Reconciliation 2002 (the flag outfit) was worn by Clarke during his Ride for Reconciliation from Perth to Warrnambool in 2002 and was displayed in the exhibition *A Ride with Alby* at the Warrnambool Art Gallery also in 2002. This outfit was created especially for Clarke by seamstress Sue Thomas.

Clarke's story and outfit has been on display in the Gallery of First Australians in a biographical context. It represents his expression of identity, personal life experiences, political views and his use of modern resources to create social change. Clark's story also illustrates his part in a larger story about the introduction and adaptation of European sports into contemporary Aboriginal practices and lifestyle.

Barbara Paulson *Curator, ATSIP*

Simpson's vest

This personally monogrammed hand knitted vest was donated to the Museum by William J Simpson. It was a gift to him from his father when he was a child. The vest was one of several commissioned by Simpson's father —for each of his children — and crafted by an Aboriginal woman from within his father's community networks while he was working with the then newly established Aboriginal Legal Services (ALS) that were being set up across New South Wales from the mid to late 1970's.

Fathers travelling and living away from families for work was a common story among Aboriginal communities during most of the last century. Simpson's father, Edward 'Ted' Simpson, was originally a shearer who travelled to where the work was. He later became a Liaison Officer for the ALS which also required continuous travelling to various communities across New South Wales. Ted Simpson became a political leader during the height of pan-Aboriginal activism and is most commonly remembered as the first Aboriginal man to become mayor of a shire council.

The vest represents both the very personal story of Simpson's childhood experiences and also that of his father being away from family for work and political leadership. Simpson said:

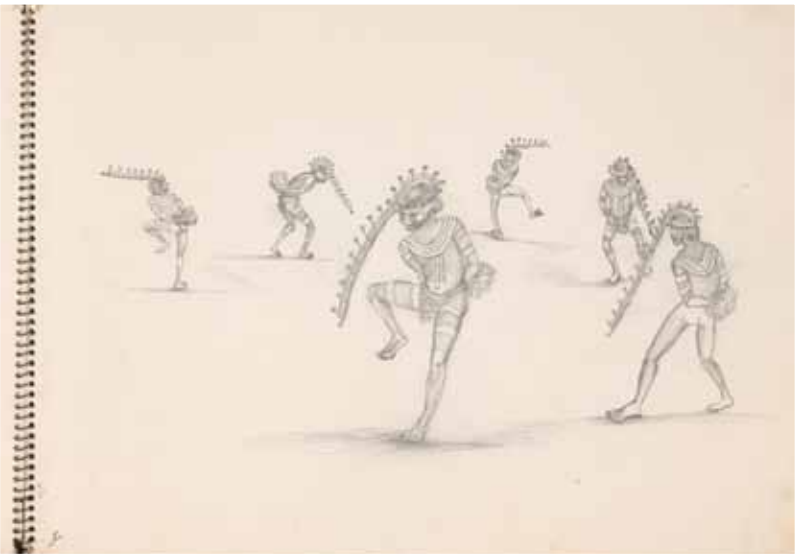
He was looking after our people, our community and our future, but when you're ten years old all you really know and care about is how he's looking after you. He often came home from different places with gifts for us kids. On this particular occasion he came home with vests for each us and they had our initials on them. We all thought we were pretty good wearing them.

William Simpson, 2008

The maker of this vest is currently unknown as the memory of the event is old and Simpson's father has since passed away. The vest is also an example of the explosion of 'red, black and yellow' in the craft industry within Aboriginal communities from the 1970s, during the period of pan-Aboriginal activism and the adoption of the then recently designed Aboriginal flag by Harold Thomas in 1971. Since then the flag and the colours 'red, black and yellow' has been flown, waved, stamped, worn and seen all around the nation. It is now a recognisable part of Australia's visual social landscape.

Barbara Paulson *Curator, ATSIP*

Butcher Joe Nangan's sketch book



Butcher Joe Nangan (1902–1989) was a fully initiated Nyigina lawman as well as a noted healer and artist. He was known throughout the west Kimberley and Pilbara regions by the name 'Butcher Joe' from the 1930s, when he worked in the Beagle Bay mission butcher shop. His Country was that of the Dampier Peninsula, between Broome and the Fitzroy River.

The Museum has purchased a sketchbook of 14 drawings by Nangan and two audio recordings. The drawings depict the traditional law and stories of the Nyigina people and the audio records the *Mayata* (pelican) dance ceremony together with a January 1972 interview with Nangan about the stories he illustrated. Butcher Joe has made art since the 1950s, when his engraved pearl shells and boab nuts were very popular. His work was motivated by a concern to record the traditional law and stories of his people.

Nangan was intensely engaged with spiritual matters. He was known in his community for the spirits of the dead, Balangan, communicating to him in dreams. His own spiritual experiences informed how he interpreted and depicted traditional stories. In the 1920s a deceased aunt appeared to him and taught him the *marinji-rinji nulu*, a ceremony relating to how the deceased ancestors appear to the living. She also endowed him with *Mayata*, the pelican being. She showed him the pelican headdress that can be seen in the above drawing from the sketchbook. Nangan wore the headdress and performed the *Mayata nulu* (dance of the pelican) from the 1920s until 1985. One of the tapes in this collection is a recording of this dance and the voiceover describes the grandfathers teaching the children how to dance. Nangan's dedication to making art and explaining his work to others made an immensely valuable contribution to preserving the traditional knowledge of his community.

Anthea Gunn *Assistant Curator*

Icon of the Papunya movement

In recent years the National Museum of Australia has been developing its Papunya art collection with the purchase of a number of important early works. These acquisitions have expanded the collection to represent key events and transitions in the first decade of the Papunya painting movement.

Story of a Woman's Camp and the Origin of the Damper 1973 by Yanyatjarri Tjakamarra is a case in point. This was one of the first Papunya paintings to appear in an international exhibition when it went on show in the *Art of Aboriginal Australia* exhibition which opened at the Shakespeare Festival at Stratford in Ontario, Canada on 4 June 1974.

The Canadian exhibition marked the beginnings of the Aboriginal Arts Board's international touring program. From 1974–81, the Board developed a further 19 exhibitions which toured to approximately 40 countries. This bold move was part of their objective to raise overseas interest in Aboriginal art at a time when the Aboriginal arts industry was struggling.

Story of a Woman's Camp, like other works in the Canadian exhibition, was of a standard size (122 x 92 cm). The consistency of size and the hanging of paintings together in rows typical of an art exhibition was an intentional move by the Board to promote the works to a 'fine arts' audience. Over time, the recognition of Papunya painting as fine art signalled an important shift in the way Aboriginal art came to be perceived.

Yanyatjarri Tjakamarra was a quietly spoken and unassuming man, whose works are now held in some of the world's major collections. *Story of a Woman's Camp* shows his mastery as a painter. Lesser known are his efforts as a ritual leader and protector of his land which lies in the dune country west of Papunya in Western Australia. For Yanyatjarri, art and culture were inseparable — his deep and abiding connection to his Country providing the inspiration for his art.

Peter Thorley *Curator, ATSIP*

Next issue highlights

- The *Yiwarra Kuju: The Canning Stock Route* exhibition and associated events
- The upcoming *Forgotten Australians* exhibition
- More about the travelling exhibition *From Little Things Big Things Grow*
- Learn more about the Pintubi dialogues projects
- See more objects from our National Historical Collection
- Updates on other new and continuing projects.

Next issue due out in April 2011.

Basket as seen in the touring tayenebe *exhibition*

Lithgow High School Students film part of their documentary in Museum

Photo: Jason McCarthy

Dancers Deborah Brown and Leonard Mickelo performing at the Papunya Painting: Out of the Australian Desert *launch at the National Art Museum of China*

Photo: Poppy Wenham

Order of Australia Medal awarded to Neville Bonner in 1984 in recognition for service to Australian Politics and Government

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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

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