

ATSIP NEWS

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Photo attributed to Howell Walker

Barks, Birds & Billabongs

'Ethnologist Charles P Mountford led the 1948 Arnhem Land Expedition ... one of the most significant scientific expeditions ever mounted in Australia — and also one of the least understood', said Margo Neale who, with the Museum's Centre for Historical Research and Public Programs section, will present the international symposium *Barks, Birds & Billabongs* in November 2009. The symposium will investigate the expedition's significance to Australia and America and the relationships and collections created from the expedition. For more information on this symposium visit www.nma.gov.au/barks_birds_billabongs.

Charles P Mountford and Groote Eylandt artists, 1948

A Western Australian Stolen Generations story in Maitland, New South Wales

In February this year, Museum photographer Lannon Harley and I had the great opportunity to visit Mary Terszak, a Nyoongah woman from south-west Western Australia, to record her memories and memorabilia of institutionalisation and her reflections on how being a member of the Stolen Generations has affected her life.

Mary had lived in four different institutions — including 18 years at Sister Kate's Children's Home, Western Australia — by the time she turned 20 years old and started living independently. A lifetime of living with memories of her forced removal from her family and her subsequent life in institutions led Mary to research, collect, write and lecture about the various tangible and intangible components of her early life.

One of the documents that Mary located through her research was her Certificate of Exemption — a once common document issued by the government of the day to advance its policy of assimilation. Mary kindly allowed us to interview her about her remarkable life and to photograph this certificate, as well as other personal documents and photos, for inclusion in the civil rights website and travelling exhibition *From Little Things Big Things Grow*, which is on show at the Museum until March 2010.



Mary Terszak with her Certificate of Exemption

Karolina Kilian, Assistant Curator, ATSIP



Tayenebe Exchange: Tasmanian Aboriginal Women's Fibre Work

The *Tayenebe* exhibition is the result of three years work by 35 women. It opened in Hobart on a biting cold and wet July evening. But the cold was forgotten with the joy and pride of the women, whose expectations were exceeded by the stunning simplicity and elegance of the exhibition. The newly made baskets and kelp containers were on display alongside some of the historic baskets and documents from the collection of the Tasmanian Museum and Gallery. There was a selection of traditional historical forms and contemporary expression.

Threads of connection run through the show — family ties, links to places, connections felt to the old people whose shadows remain, and new ties to the wider group of makers. Another new connection now has been made to the National Museum. A partner in the project, the Museum is delighted to have acquired 35 baskets from *Tayenebe*. The exhibition, curated by Julie Gough, is on display in Hobart until 25 November 2009. It will come to the National Museum in Canberra in May 2010 as part of its tour, which also includes the Casula Powerhouse, New South Wales, Queensland Museum, Brisbane, the Koorie Heritage Trust in Melbourne, and Flinders University Gallery in Adelaide.

Andy Greenslade, Curator, ASTIP

Marking a historic day — The Apology



13 February 2009 marked 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 peoples campaigned for recognition of the hurt caused by government policies promoting forced removal of children from their families. *Bringing Them Home*, the report of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity 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, along with other government departments, also held a staff morning tea to further the understanding that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities across Australia were affected by the policy and practice of 'removing the children'. Indeed, that staff they worked with and alongside were affected.

Nyukana (Daisy) Baker: A Retrospective

Nyukana 'Daisy' Baker's artistic career of over 50 years was honoured in Adelaide in August 2009. Nyukana, who has lived most of her life on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands in South Australia, has led an extraordinary life of making art, developing her skills and transferring her individual designs across many different media. Looking back on her life through the works on display, it was hard to believe that one woman could be so exquisitely skilled in so many things. A photo of the young Nyukana standing on the lawn in front of the manse at Ernabella shows a young and delicate woman with a diffident air that is belied by the evident sureness and confidence of her work.

Small, precise paintings, prints, wool work, batiks, ceramics, fibre and beadwork light the walls of this exhibition, curated by Diana Young and staged at the Jam Factory. It draws on a number of collections, both private and institutional. The National Museum is happy to have been able to contribute to this important show with loans from its large collection of Ernabella-related material.

Andy Greenslade, Curator, ASTIP



Nyukana Daisy Baker Retrospective

Photo: Courtesy Ernabella Arts



Have your say — the right way

If you're interested in the issues surrounding Indigenous craft and design, such as ethical practice, authenticity and education, why not check out — and contribute to — the online forum Rightway, on the Craft Australia website <http://carightway.ning.com>.

The forum is one of the outcomes of the Selling Yarns 2: Innovation for Sustainability conference held at the Museum in March this year. You'll also find papers presented at the conference, including the keynote address by Aboriginal designer and TV personality Alison Page. The sell-out conference, with its market day and extensive program of workshops, was presented in association with our partners Craft Australia and the Australian National University.

Andy Greenslade, Curator, ASTIP

Bottles, 2006, by Robyn Djunginy, Ramingining, Northern Territory, as seen in the exhibition ReCoil: Change and Exchange in Coiled Fibre Art

Namatjira's gift — on display

This is the only thing left from our childhood — the only tangible thing. **Lola Edwards, 2009**

The famous artist Albert Namatjira visited the girls of Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls Training Home in 1956. After he returned to Central Australia he painted a picture of his Country and sent it back to the girls at the Home. It was his gift for those Aboriginal children who had been deprived of family, culture and Country.

The painting was hung in the main dormitory, and became a part of every girl's life. Everything else the girls had belonged to the Home; only this belonged to them. This year the 'Girls' — as the women call themselves — generously donated the painting to the National Museum. The painting was on display in the Museum's Hall during July this year.



Albert Namatjira (centre) with his son Keith (rear) with the girls from the Home. Lola Edwards is directly in front of Namatjira