



INDIGENOUS BIOGRAPHY AND  
AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
*Conference*

9-12 July 2007

**Abstracts**

In Alphabetical Order by  
Speaker

**Theme: Who is my Audience?**

**Presenter: Susan Ballyn**  
University of Barcelona

## **THE ETHICS OF TEACHING ABORIGINAL STUDIES IN A SPANISH TERTIARY INSTITUTION**

In the course of this paper I want to present my personal experience when teaching Aboriginal texts in a Spanish tertiary institution. The course, an optional subject, consists of writing by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal authors in comparison with New Zealand Maori and Pakeha writers. The focus is on identity and relationships with the land, exile and dispossession in its various forms. I can not, however, approach the literature without first putting in place the necessary cultural and historical background in which the texts are encrusted. I am well aware of the ethical problems which many Aboriginal people would see in my involvement in teaching in this field. My situation is further complicated by the fact that I am neither Aboriginal nor Australian, but English. My students are English majors and are taught in English; however, ninety percent have absolutely no background in either the Aboriginal or European/Australian history of the country. On the one hand, I have a clean slate to write on, but on the other the question is, do I, can I inscribe a correct knowledge on this tabula rasa? To what extent do my own limitations as a non-Aboriginal or even Australian teacher limit, or distort what I transmit?

Aware of all the above, I believe that honesty must be the benchmark of my work with my students. Over the years I have been privileged to meet both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who have put their work and time at my disposal. These tireless friends and colleagues have enabled me to establish a forum within which my students can pursue their studies. We are fortunate too in having renowned Aboriginal authors visiting to speak, as well as highly respected non-Aboriginal scholars. This, I hope, provides a formula which enables the course, to come as close as possible to transmitting something of the reality of Aboriginal history, culture and literature.

The problems I encounter are recurrent both with regard to myself and the class. Each year I am confronted, stimulated and challenged by new hurdles and complications the discussion of which will form the core of this paper.

### **Biography:**

Sue Ballyn is a Senior Lecturer at Barcelona University and the Director of The Australian Studies Centre. Her research work focuses on the narratives of Spanish and Lusophone Convicts transported to Australia and also on the Surgeons' journals on board the transports. She lectures in Postcolonial Studies at both undergraduate and post-graduate levels and also in English Renaissance Poetry. She has published widely in the area of Postcolonial Studies.

## Performance Session

**Presenter:** Getano Jonathan Bann  
Singer, Song Writer, Story Teller,  
Registered Music Therapist

Getano was raised on the banks of the Pioneer River in his home town of Mackay, North Queensland, Australia. Music, dance, storytelling and humour were an influential and integral part of his childhood, growing up in an extended Torres Strait Islander Family. *"My Father was a 'Ten Pound' Scot's man who travelled to Australia from Aberdeen and my Mother a descendent from KEBISU a Head Hunting Chieftain from Iama (Yam) Island in the Torres Strait"*.

Getano began his musical apprenticeship amongst the mangroves and the creek beds, daydreaming; creating poems, melodies and songs which were to form his first compositions. As a Singer, Songwriter, Storyteller and Entertainer for well over 25 Years, Getano has been described as highly passionate, poignant, and often humorous. His songs are a rich blend and mixture of musical styles, from smooth Latin, kick ass Blues, tender Soul, slick Funk, emotional Ballads, cruisey Reggae and full throttle Rock. In amongst this musical feast Getano intertwines family stories, cultural perspectives, life lessons, self reflective moments and gollops of humour, which makes a performance of irresistible listening and entertaining moments.

Getano works as a Registered Music Therapist specialising in Children and Adolescents issues which includes, addictions, self esteem, anger, grief loss and bereavement and mental health. *"I love working with these age groups because this is a significant and profound stage in all our lives"*. *"I have worked in numerous settings, situations and environments from Prisons, Youth Centres, Schools, Refuges, Flexible Learning Centres, Libraries, Detox Units, Hospitals, Respite Centres, Community Centres and Kindergartens*.

Some high-lights from Getano's extensive career, a professional Dancer (Aboriginal Islander Dance Theatre), Graduate of CASM (Centre of Aboriginal Studies in Music), Dance Choreographer – Outback Children Spectacular (2,500 School children from Outback NSW 1988), Conceptualising and Coordinating 'Peace in the Park (1990, the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the slaying of John Lennon), working with several theatre companies, including, the South Australian Acting Company's production of ' You Came To My Country and You Didn't Turn Black', and numerous Contact Inc Productions, events, tours and School Projects. Working as a guest presenter on the Humphrey 'B' Bear show, performing at various high profile festivals including the Woodford / Maleny Folk Festivals, 4<sup>th</sup> South Pacific Festival (Tahiti), Bellingen Global Roots Festival, Queensland Writer's Festival, Thredbo World Music Festival, Torres Strait Islander Festival, Warana, Winter Solstice, The Biennial, Dar' Festival, Adelaide and Brisbane Fringe Festivals, NAIDOC Celebrations and Public speaking engagements.

Some of the many talented acts and artists Getano has supported and shared the stage with, include: Soweto String Quartet, Shane Howard and the Goanna Band, Kavisha Mazzella, Archie Roach and Ruby Hunter, Christine Anu, The Mills Sisters, Chris Wilson, Kevin Carmody, Epzo Bangora, Dya Singh, Global Roots Network, Lindsey Pollack, Mel Webb, Greg Sheehan, Humphrey 'B' Bear, The Wurrupi Band, Coloured Stones, Bart Willoughby (No Fixed Address) and Mary G.

*"One of my greatest passions is meeting interesting people , from fascinating and diverse places, listening to their 'Life Stories' , as these stories help to enrich my life and inspire me to see what the world is truly about, and hopefully through my music I can inspire and enrich the lives of others along way"*.

Website: [www.getanobann.com.au](http://www.getanobann.com.au)

**Theme: Who Owns the Story?**

**Presenter: Jeremy Beckett**

University of Sydney

### **OTHER PEOPLE'S AUTOBIOGRAPHIES: PRESENTING AND REPRESENTING**

Indigenous autobiographies typically come in the form of oral histories, recorded or taken down over a number of occasions, in more or less fragmentary form. Converting such material into a publication tends to fall to the collector, who has then to make a variety of more or less intrusive decisions. If the subject is still living these can be made in consultation, although the subject may or may not have some idea of how an autobiography is put together. If the subject has died in the meantime, the collector, can either just edit the recorded material, **presenting** (rather than **representing**) it as a story which may or may not be true, or seek to check up on certain incidents, whether simply to confirm them, or to get further background. There is, further, the temptation for the editor to speculate on emotions and motivations, a tempting but risky undertaking.

#### **Biography:**

Jeremy Beckett is an anthropologist who has worked for many years with Aboriginal people in Western New South Wales, and with Torres Strait Islanders in the Strait and on the mainland. His biographical work includes 'George Dutton's Country: Portrait of an Aboriginal Drover' (*Aboriginal History*, 1977); 'Walter Newton's History of the World - or Australia' *American Ethnologist* 20; *Wherever I Go: Myles Lalor's 'Oral History' (MUP)*, and 'Autobiography and Testimonial Discourse in Myles Lalor's Oral History'(in *Telling Stories*, Attwood and Magowan eds).

**Theme: Mixed Identities**  
**Presenter: Jenni Caruso**  
University of Adelaide

My presentation will cover both my life and constructions of multiple identities and its personal impacts, as well as looking at the blocks to Indigenous writing in western academia.

**Biography:**

I am an Eastern Aranda woman who is a member of the Stolen Generations. I have been a resident of Croker Island Methodist Mission, with subsequent placement with a non-Aboriginal family in Adelaide.

I am currently the Coordinator of the Yaitya Purrana Indigenous Health Unit at the University of Adelaide, and have graduated with Honours in History in 2007. I am in the process of enrolling to undertake a PhD in History with the central focus being the Stolen Generations and the impacts of those experiences on both myself and collectively on Aboriginal community members, and the deficit the lack of recognition by the broader Australian community on our notions of 'national identity'.

**Theme: Art and Politics**  
**Presenter: Lindsay Cleland**

**A GROUP EXPERIENCE OF READING INDIGENOUS AUTOBIOGRAPHY**  
**ONE AUDIENCE: AND A BRIDGE TO THE NON-INDIGENOUS**

An Indigenous Autobiography Group made up of Members of the University of the Third Age, Canberra, and Friends of the National Museum of Australia began meeting in July 2004 in the Friends Lounge to discuss a book a month - and continues to do so. All that is asked is that books be read with an open mind. Thirty books have now been read and discussed.

These have included Sally Morgan *My Place*, Leah Purcell *Black Chicks Talking*, Reginald Birch Wyndham *Yella Fella*, Marnie Kennedy *Born a Half-Caste*, Kim Scott and Hazel Brown *Kayang and Me*, Connie Nungulla McDonald *When You Grow Up*, Janet Mathews *The Two Worlds of Jimmy Barker*, Doris E Kartinyeri *Kick the Tin* and Molly Mallet *My Past Their Future*. Stories from Cape Barren Island.

There have also been outstanding occasions when an author has come to speak to a book including Jackie Huggins on *Auntie Rita and Sister Girl*, Kerry Reed-Gilbert and *Talkin About Country*, Larissa Behrendt on *Home* and Heather Goodall on *Isabel Flick*. The many lives of an extraordinary Aboriginal woman There was also an occasion when Stan Grant senior spoke on his son's autobiography *The Tears of Strangers*.

Such powerful face-to-face contacts have been seen as ensuring that the purpose and activity of the Group is validated by Indigenous support, one of the essential requirements.

The belief has been that there is pungency in the first hand personal stories, characteristic of Indigenous autobiography, which can attract an older group of those who may have had little contact with Indigenous affairs but feel the need to know more.

Comment will be made on how accurate this belief has proved to be and the general level of public interest; how books have been selected and the question of authenticity; the confidentiality of discussion, particularly when an author is present; the perspective that Indigenous autobiography is comparatively recent; problems of relevant books going out of print and the cost of purchasing a book a month; views of course members and aspects of books that have been particularly compelling and the fact that the Group is currently non-Indigenous.

Finally there will be some comments on overall outcomes.

**Biography:**

1954 BA (Hons) Political Science and History University of Adelaide.

1955-57 in Indonesia under the Volunteer Graduate Scheme.

Career in Manuscripts and Archives: National Library of Australia 1960-70;

National Archives of Australia 1970-89.

Post retirement contact with John Harris and influenced by his 1980 *One Blood*; involvement with SWAAG (Solidarity with Aboriginal Australia Group); Martung Upah Conference, Sydney 1993; Reconciliation Conference, Melbourne 1997; involvement with Sorry Day/Journey of Healing group; Coordinator U3A/NMA Indigenous Autobiography group July 2004 to date.

**Theme: Who is my Audience?**

**Presenter: Christine Dauber**

University of Queensland

## **INDIGENOUS LIVES AND MUSEUMS**

Many museums in the late twentieth and early twenty first century have shifted their focus from objects to people. This changing trend has been particularly evident in those museums which are involved in presenting public exhibitions relating to Indigenous Lives. Where the object rich ethnographic display (and collection) was once considered to present an unchallengeable document to the lives and histories of Indigenous people, oral history, testimony and memory now bear witness to the 'hidden histories' that lay behind those objects. However, as recent events surrounding the opening of the National Museum of Australia show, this form of exhibition is not without its detractors.

My paper explores the difficulties and tensions that exist at the intersections of memory, oral history and testimony with the existing historical record and with existing perceptions of what constitutes history. Particular reference is made to the way in which museums such as the National Museum of Australia, the Museum of Civilisation and the Pequot Tribal Nations Museum present Indigenous lives.

### **Biography:**

Christine Dauber has, in 2007, successfully completed the requirements for her Doctorate at the University of Queensland, Brisbane. Her thesis *Highjacked Agenda: The National Museum of Australia and the Gallery of the First Australians* addresses how the inclusion of the Gallery of the First Australians within a national museum context, inflects concepts of the national in Australian cultural life. The thesis also undertakes a detailed analysis of the chameleon like qualities of the architecture which, Dauber argues, must be read in the context of the exhibitions within and situates the controversies surrounding the opening of the museum within the 'history wars debate'. Dauber has previously published in the area of imposture (Elizabeth Durack and Eddie Burrup) and museums exhibition of Aboriginal culture.

**Theme: Who is my Audience?**  
**Presenter: Francesca Di Blasio**  
University of Trento

**A PATH OF WORDS: THE RECEPTION OF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ABORIGINAL WRITING IN ITALY**

The words of Indigenous Australian women have taken me to Australia several years ago, I reached that wondrous continent following a path of words, although, or even because, as Patricia Sykes puts it, ' the syllables / on the page are not / the land beneath the name' . I knew I had to see the *land*, and I did, having the precious occasion of meeting Jackie Huggins, whom I consider my 'guiding light' in my journey through Aboriginal literature. I started studying Aboriginal women's autobiographies in 1999 and they still are one of the main interests in my research activity. When Jackie Huggins told me about your conference I was doubtful about making a proposal, I felt like I couldn't possibly, as an outsider, have something to say, rather I could listen. After a talk with Franca Tamisari though I felt more confident: what I can do is to reply to one of the questions you posit, 'Who are my audiences?' I, my students, my colleagues, my friends from the antipodes are all audience for Aboriginal literature, biography, autobiography, story, history. My paper would be an account on the state of the reception of Aboriginal literature in Italy, within my academic community and beyond. I'm translating Rita and Jackie Huggins' *Auntie Rita* (and I regret very much the book won't be finished by the time of your conference); with Franca Tamisari we're editing a volume in Italian on Indigenous Australian art which is due in September 2007 (and which includes contributions by several Aboriginal artists, Fiona Foley and John Mundine among them); my students have written and are currently writing dissertations on *Auntie Rita*, *Steam Pigs, Is that You Ruthie?*, and so on. The hermeneutical instruments of my readings of autobiographical Aboriginal writing range from Deleuze to Heidegger, from bell hooks to Audre Lorde, in a dialogic dimension which is meant to be inter-cultural and cross-cultural. In *Don't Scratch my Rolex* the late Lisa Belleair writes: 'Hold me sister / I need your strength / got to keep believing / that somewhere someone / cares'. It would be an honour to let you know that *here, we care*.

**Biography:**

Francesca Di Blasio, PhD in English literature is *ricercatrice* at the University of Trento. Her areas of research are Modernism, Postmodernism, Indigenous Australian literature and Literary Theory. She has published several articles on George Orwell, Virginia Woolf, Samuel Beckett, Sally Morgan, Shakespeare, and a volume on the theories of the gaze in English and American Literature (*Teoria e Pratiche dello Sguardo*, Bergamo 2001). She is currently working on Australian Aboriginal Women and the (post-?) colonial gaze, and she is the author of *Native(ness) as/and Other(ness): the Autobiographical Gaze in Aboriginal Women's Writings*, *'Moving to a strange place': spazio coloniale e spazio esistenziale nella letteratura aborigena australiana*, *Scrivere l'identità nella letteratura aborigena australiana delle donne*, and of the volume *The Pelican and the Wintamarra Tree: voci della letteratura aborigena australiana* (Trento 2006).

**Theme: Elusive Relationships**  
**Presenter: Kristina Everett**  
Macquarie University

**TOO MUCH INFORMATION: WHEN THE BURDEN OF TRUST PARALYSES REPRESENTATION**

In 2001 I began collecting material – interviews, stories, copies of paintings, photos, maps and documents – so that I could write the biography of a senior Aboriginal woman who belongs to a group which claims traditional Aboriginal ownership of a large part of modern Sydney. This material was intended to also provide data for my PhD research in anthropology.

Before I began my research I had already enjoyed a long, close friendship with the intended 'subject' of the biography which had extended into a strong association with the community in which she lives and works.

The kind of close engagement that writing the biography produced developed our friendship in ways that produced information that my further research into the socio-political relations of the community for my PhD revealed to be highly problematic for the community's claims.

My research 'subject' does not object to my publishing this information, and its publication does not breach the demands of University ethics, but my own ethics precluded including the chapter concerning the biography in my thesis despite academic pressure for its inclusion. I have also; so far, been unable to edit the biography for publication as removal of potentially politically damaging information leaves the rest of the work somehow 'empty'.

My presentation is focused on the ways in which existing friendships between the 'subjects' of biographies and their writers can develop to produce information that can be both beyond the limits of trust of the previous relationship and also beyond what is ever expected (or needed) by a researcher. Ultimately this is also about how relationships can survive and develop in the face of these sorts of dilemmas.

**Biography:**

Kristina Everett (PhD anthropology).

Kristina's research has been largely focused on Indigenous cultural (re)emergence in urban contexts. Most of her work has been conducted in the western suburbs of Sydney. She has been living in Melbourne until recently where her interests have included Indigenous tertiary education and researching the role of white educators in supporting Indigenous teachers and students in achieving their educational goals. Kristina aims to develop this work in her new role as lecturer at Warawara, department of Indigenous Studies, Macquarie University.

**Theme: Elusive Relationships**  
**Presenter: Samantha Faulkner**

**SPEAKING THROUGH – THE MAKING OF *LIFE BLONG ALI DRUMMOND***

Mohammed Ali Drummond will be 90 years old in July 2007. He is a quiet and simple man who has earned a lot of respect as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elder in both the Torres Strait and Cape York. He has led an interesting and challenging life as a pearl shell diver in the Torres Strait and cane-cutter in North Queensland. He witnessed history unfold when he saw the Japanese bombings of Horn Island and described in letters what life was like.

Ali's life story is being captured by his granddaughter Samantha Faulkner, with the manuscript due for publication by Aboriginal Studies Press, (AIATSIS) in late 2007. Samantha will discuss the complex process of drafting Ali's biography that evolved from a 'yarn' over a cup of tea to focussed questions and interviews, why she choose her grandfather's story to tell, the bumps along the way and the joys. There were a number of lessons learned in relation to dealing with family and cultural protocols and in balancing the relationship of granddaughter versus biographer. She will share how her experience has enriched and assisted her with future writing adventures.

**Biography:**

Samantha Faulkner is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander woman, with links to Badu and Moa Island in the Torres Strait and the Yadhaigana people of Cape York. A recipient of a research grant from the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, she is finalizing a manuscript on her grandfather's life to be published by Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra. She has contributed to the Lonely Planet 2000 edition, *Aboriginal Australia & the Torres Strait Islands* and has membership of the QLD Writer's Centre, NSW Writers Centre (life membership), and the Australian Society of Authors. She has a passion to share the stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia with other Australians and the international community.

**Theme: Controversial Lives**  
**Presenter: Karen Fox**  
The Australian National University

**FROM KATH TO OODGEROO: CONTROVERSIAL LIVES IN POPULAR REPRESENTATIONS**

This paper takes up the theme of controversial lives by examining biographical fragments appearing in the popular genre of large circulation newspapers. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, Australian and New Zealand writers published much about the lives of famous inhabitants of their nations, particularly about those who became considered as national heroes and heroines. In both countries, a small number of Indigenous women were part of this canon of celebrated lives. Several such women were and are controversial figures, publicly criticised by some and celebrated by others. Who are these women and how did they become famous? How are their lives represented in snapshots for public consumption while still in the process of being lived? What efforts do the subjects of these biographical fragments make to upset stereotypes and have their voices heard? How does a life lived controversially become a celebrated life? The phenomenon of public lives means that readers of full-scale biographies or autobiographies often come to them with images of the subject already vivid in their minds. In this paper I explore popular narratives and representations of the life of Oodgeroo Noonuccal (previously Kath Walker) that are to be found in large circulation dailies in Australia. By analysing and weaving together the ways in which a controversial life is narrated in the popular media, this paper explores alternative ways to understand the controversial life.

**Biography:**

Karen Fox completed her BA (Hons) with a double major in History and Political Science, at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2003. She completed her MA in 2005 and moved to Canberra in 2006 to begin her doctoral research at the Australian National University. Her PhD thesis is provisionally entitled *Celebrated Women: Maori and Aboriginal Women in National Imaginings, 1950-2000*.

**Theme: Controversial Lives**  
**Presenter: Sean Gorman**  
**University of Melbourne**

**PROTOCOLS AND PROCESSES: WRITING THE KRAKOUER BROTHERS STORY**

The lives' of the Krakouer brothers makes for a great modern day football story. From their humble beginnings in Mt Barker in the South West of Western Australia Jim and Phillip Krakouer were able to, despite great hardship and prejudice, use their skill as footballers and determination as people to achieve greatness in their chosen sporting profession. But just as Jim and Phillip were very different players that complimented one another on the field their lives after football took very divergent paths. Phillip settled into employment and family life and Jim struggled with the pressure of being an ex-football champion with a limited income. This saw Jim convicted of drug trafficking in 1995 and spend almost a decade in jail for his crime.

It was the differences that the Krakouers displayed as footballers that mirrored their different lives that attracted me to their story. While looking at and comparing the Krakouers life experiences, I will discuss how I as a non-Indigenous researcher dealt with Indigenous protocols and developed a cross-cultural dialogue with two Noongar men who had experienced many different things over the course of their private and public lives.

**Biography:**

Sean Gorman has studied and worked in an Indigenous field for 14 years. In that time he has tutored and lectured in the Indigenous Studies Program at Murdoch University and at Edith Cowan University (Perth, Australia) where he has worked as a post doctoral researcher in the Centre for Indigenous Australian Knowledges; Kurongkurl Katitjin. Currently he is lecturing in the School of Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne. His book entitled, *Brotherboys: The Story of Jim and Phillip Krakouer* was published in May 2005 by Allen and Unwin.

## Theme: Alternative Narratives

Presenter: Oliver Haag

Vienna, Austria

### FROM THE MARGINS TO THE MAINSTREAM: A HISTORY OF PUBLISHED INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN AUTO/BIOGRAPHIES

Since their emergence in the early 1950s, published Indigenous auto/biographies – that is, auto/biographical stories being co/authored by Indigenous persons – have, as is often said, attracted attention in their re/telling Australian histories. Yet Indigenous auto/biographies not only impart historical knowledge, but also boast of a history of their own. Retracing this history can be achieved in two broad ways: First, by analysing congruent themes having been shaped by historic events so as then to elaborate both temporal and 'geographic' phases (e.g., the issue of the Stolen Generations prevailed in specific areas at specific points in time); second, by drawing attention to rather external factors that have exercised an influence on the publications, such as publishers, production processes, reception, and dissemination. Here, I am concerned with the latter.

As with every socio-historical phenomenon, also the history of published Indigenous auto/biographies is marked by considerable changes over time. In particular, these changes can be observed in the cases of gender distribution, inter/national reception, and production processes. The following are some of the crucial data framing the publication history:

**Publication history.** Overall, 170 or so books have been published between 1950 and 2004. Especially since the late 1970s, the number of published auto/biographies has increased continuously. In proportion to the 1990s, it is very likely that the first decade of the new millennium will meet the pinnacle of published auto/biographies ever since its inception: on average, 6.6 books were published per year during the 1990s, whereas between 2000 and 2004 it was 14.5 books that were published per year. In addition, year specific data shows 4 considerable peaks of published auto/biographies: (a) the years 1977 & 1978; (b) the years 1988 & 1989; (c) the year 1995; (d) the year 2000 of the Sydney Olympics.

**Autobiography – Biography.** While the bulk of Indigenous auto/biography is autobiographical (81%), the genre of biography has also slightly increased from the mid 1980s onwards.

**Production Processes.** The development of published Indigenous auto/biography is distinguished by both even and uneven phases. It is insofar characterized by an even progression as publishing numbers in general as well as those of biographies, and co-productions in particular have been constantly increasing. There is also a more or less linear development in the production processes as well as a tidy progression in editorial practices: while many life stories were previously transcribed and edited by non-Indigenous persons, they are nowadays increasingly being co-produced by Indigenous persons, as with 'My Place' (1987), 'When the Pelican Laughed' (1992), 'Auntie Rita' (1994), or 'Ngay janijirr ngank' (1999). As well, as regards to a culturally sensitive editing policy, there are considerable improvements in editing, influenced, in part, by the establishment of Indigenous publishing houses.

**Gender imbalance.** There are, in general, more women than men authors: while men prevailed by 55% during the period between 1950 and 1987, the quota of women authors (64%) increased between 1987 and 2004. Today, there are significantly more women than men authors having

gone through the publication process. Also, it is women auto/biographers that count among the internationally well-received authors.

**Publishers and international reception.** As to publishing houses and reception, the late 1980s have been a pivotal turning point: Especially since the establishment of *Magabala Books* in 1987, Indigenous auto/biographies have increasingly been brought out by Indigenous publishers. As a consequence, publications proliferated since then. And also in the late 1980s, the first best-sellers among Indigenous auto/biographies were about to make their way to international fame: some of them were not only read overseas, but also translated into various languages: In German, both Ruby Langford Ginibi and Sally Morgan were published by explicitly feminist presses, while 'Rabbit Proof-Fence' was released by *Rowohlt*, one of Germany's most renowned quality publishers. Interestingly, at least in overseas contexts, women auto/biographers have been promoted by either feminist or mainstream presses.

So, from a quantitative and statistical perspective, published Indigenous auto/biographies have all but remained the same over the past decades: a once local and national market changed into a global market that is now no longer confined to an English-speaking background, with audiences now stretching all over Europe. What once had been predominantly autobiographical also became biographical. What once had been barely surrounded by discussions over inter-cultural editing and collaboration processes became the focus of ethical debates. And, finally, what once had been a male-dominated genre now became a female-dominated genre.

To sum it up, published Indigenous auto/biographies have undergone a lot of changes in the past few decades. So it is more than likely that they will also adapt to new challenges and market demands in the future: nothing stays the same, as the saying goes.

**Biography:**

Oliver Haag, born in Graz in 1977, studied History and Political Science at the University of Vienna, specialized in the history of historiography and auto/biography, gender history, and theories of nation-building, with particular interest in Australia. Author of a thesis on published Indigenous Australian auto/biographies, and academic writings on gender history and auto/biography. He currently lives in Vienna, Austria.

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**Biography:**

Anna Haebich is Director of the Centre for Public Culture and Ideas at Griffith University. Anna is known for her leadership in multi-disciplinary and cross-cultural approaches to research. Her research interests are Indigenous history, community and family history, environmental history, art history and the history of the body. Anna's career brings together university teaching and research, museum curatorship, visual arts practice and her long-term personal involvement through marriage and research with the Nyungar community in Western Australia.

**Theme: Art and Politics**  
**Presenter: Stephen Hagan**  
University of Southern Queensland

**HOW HAVE INDIGENOUS AUTOBIOGRAPHIES AND BIOGRAPHIES CHANGED IN THE PAST  
HALF-CENTURY?**

Self-perception

Political contexts

Changing audience

Public interest - has it remained/will it remain the same?

My paper will address the difficulty I've encountered as an Indigenous man in writing an autobiography without the assistance of a mentor and without having attending any writing courses.

In particular it looks at how I had to tread a careful path of not offending my Indigenous family (father's tribal affiliation to the Kullilli tribe on his father's side and Mardagan tribe on his mother's side / mother's tribal affiliation to the Kooma tribe on her father's side and Gungari on her mother's side) but at the same time staying true to the very notion of an authentic and inclusive appraisal of one's journey through life.

The complex nature of such a diverse cultural background meant that I had to present an equal share of historical connection to country for both my parents – for future generation's family linkage and the maintenance of their cultural significance.

I will also discuss the sensitive nature of Indigenous research and what justifies creditable research eg. accepting verbal representation and being true to a story by the inclusion of controversial – but not necessarily secret/sacred information.

Finally the paper will also appraise the political imperative of the message being transmitted through my autobiography (*The N Word – One Man's Stand*: Magabala, 2005) and the impact that message can and has had on my immediate family and close associates and how it has led me to writing several books in different genres.

Subsequent to winning a Deadly Award for my autobiography in 2005 I have established a publishing house 'Ngalga Warralu Publishing Pty Ltd' as a necessity to publish additional books that otherwise would have been ignored by mainstream publishers because of their high Indigenous content and as many have said '... lacking in commercial viability.'

**Biography:**

Stephen Hagan is a Kullilli man of south-west Queensland, the 2006 NAIDOC Person of the Year, an award winning author, documentary maker, internationally acclaimed academic and commentator on race relations.

**Theme: Mixed Identities**  
**Presenter: Kris Harman**  
University of Tasmania

### **MULTIPLE SUBJECTIVITIES: WRITING DUALL'S LIFE AS SOCIAL BIOGRAPHY**

Viewed by colonists as being a leader amongst his people, the Dharawal man known as Duall was, at different times, both celebrated and reviled by a settler population that saw him exiled to Van Diemen's Land in 1816 as a convict and, later, decorated with a brass breastplate.

This paper considers the process of writing Duall's life as 'social biography'. Taking what has been recovered of Duall's life as a case in point, it highlights the capacity for such a reconstructed life to reveal subtleties and complexities in colonial relations that may not emerge should the subject be endowed with a singular identity like 'resistance leader', for example.

At the same time, some of the issues inherent in such an undertaking are acknowledged such as the mediated nature of the archival materials upon which such a (re)construction is necessarily based. While the finished product – a short biography of Duall – might tell the reader more about the people who compiled and kept records about him than it does about Duall himself, it will be argued that this nevertheless reveals something significant as those same colonial forces helped shape and determine Duall's destiny.

#### **Biography:**

Kris Harman holds a first class honours degree in Aboriginal Studies & English from the University of Tasmania where she is currently completing a PhD dissertation. Kris's thesis focuses on the various factors contributing to Aboriginal men from New South Wales being transported as convicts to Norfolk Island and Van Diemen's Land (amongst other places) and also considers the various outcomes of these processes. Her research interests are grounded in contact history in the former colonies of New South Wales, Van Diemen's Land, New Zealand, and the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope.

## **Theme: Elusive Relationships**

**Presenter: Aroha Harris**

University of Auckland

### **BIOGRAPHY AS BALANCING ACT: LIFE ACCORDING TO JOE AND THE RULES OF HISTORICAL METHOD**

Joe Hawke was a young boy when, in 1951, his people were forcibly removed from the place he knew as home; the Ngati Whatua papakainga (settlement) at Okahu Bay in Auckland – New Zealand's largest and, at the time, fastest growing city. It was one of the darker moments in New Zealand history, and one that can be tracked into the nineteenth century down a long line of government actions designed to wrest the Ngati Whatua people from their lands. Twenty-six years after the papakainga was destroyed, Joe Hawke led a 507-day occupation of Bastion Point to protest and stop the government of the day from selling land regarded as the rightful property of Ngati Whatua. The occupation ended spectacularly when police and armed forces removed the protestors and destroyed the temporary marae (tribal meeting house and associated land and facilities) they had erected there. In the aftermath Joe, a builder by trade, found his profile in the protest rendered him virtually unemployable, and the subject of critical, vicious and sometimes threatening attention. Ten years after the occupation the Waitangi Tribunal substantially upheld the Ngati Whatua claims to their lands, and the subsequent settlement of those claims has enabled a degree of tribal economic and community development.

This paper will reflect on researching and writing Joe's biography, a work currently in progress. It will focus in particular on the balancing acts required – on my listening to the multi-layered history of one man, organised by his memories, experiences of the past and evolving visions for the future, and, simultaneously, my academic location in the contested ground between Maori and western historical scholarships. It will illustrate the challenges of balancing the demands of the academy with the desires of Joe and his family, the delicacies and indelicacies of Joe's story, and the privileges of the biographer in 'knowing' Joe with ingrained public views of him as radical activist.

#### **Biography:**

Aroha Harris belongs to the Te Rarawa and Ngapuhi tribes of Aotearoa New Zealand, and lectures in the history department, University of Auckland. She has a background in both historical and social research, having previously researched for the Waitangi Tribunal and Ministry of Health, as well as her own iwi (tribes). Her current research interests include Maori during the post-war years and Maori oral histories.

**Theme: Alternative Narratives**  
**Presenter: Hau-Ren Bradley Hung**  
Providence University, Taiwan

**TRANSMITTING ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY THROUGH STORYTELLING  
IN THE INDIGENOUS (AUTO)BIOGRAPHY OF JOSEPH BRUCHAC AND AHRONGLONG SAKINU**

The academic study of environmental philosophy emerged in the 1970's due to the environmental crises. Since then, thinkers even in different fields have begun to contemplate environmental issues. The basic but crucial inquiries include defining nature, recognizing the value of nature, and understanding the relation between human beings and other forms of nature. What is often overlooked is the value indigenous literatures can have in the construction of a more profound environmental philosophy. In the (auto)biography of the Native American writer Joseph Bruchac and the Taiwanese indigenous writer Ahronglong Sakinu, the proper relationship human beings should maintain with other forms of nature is vividly delineated by telling the myths, the legends, and the stories of hunting experiences. In this study, I explore and compare the indigenous environmental philosophy transmitted through storytelling in Bruchac's and Sakinu's (auto)biography.

I examine the similarities and differences in the environmental philosophy in Bruchac's and Sakinu's (auto)biography. I find that these (auto)biographers both use naming, anthropomorphism, transformation and ritual in their stories to show that necessity, circularity, and respect are the basic principles of indigenous environmental philosophy. Further, the perceptions in their environmental philosophy are shown to correspond with concepts in western environmental philosophy derived from Charles Darwin, Aldo Leopold, and the Gaia Hypothesis. I conclude my analysis of Western and Eastern concepts in these authors with the observation that opening another access to initiate the dialogue between indigenous writers and the formal study of environmental philosophy can contribute to integrating indigenous concepts with academic environmental philosophy.

**Biography:**

Hau-Ren Bradley Hung was born in Tainan, the oldest city of Taiwan. He received his M.A. degree in Literature from Providence University, Taiwan, in January 2006. During his study at graduate school, Hau-Ren attempted to create poems and developed his interdisciplinary research interest in Indigenous Culture, Nature Writing, and Environmental Philosophy. He was recommended as the leader of Literature Association of Providence University in 2003. He presented his paper in 2005 Popular Culture Association and American Culture Association Conference. Since 2005, he had been a teaching assistant for one course in General Education Program, Human and Environment. In 2006, he served as a coordinator and facilitator at EAST (Environment, Aborigines, and Social Transformation Group) to hold a series of academic activities, including 2006 International Indigenous Documentary Film Festival and Forums, 2006 International Conference on Austronesian Studies, Training Workshops on Life History and Visual Media Documentary for Indigenous Peoples, etc. Hau-Ren is currently an instructor at Department of English Language, Literature, and Linguistics in Providence University, offering Multicultural Learning and Exchange course for international students. As for his present research, comparative study of indigenous literatures and cultures is his focus.

**Theme: Who Owns the Story?**

**Presenter: Michael Jacklin**

**University of Wollongong**

**CONSULTATION AND CRITIQUE: IMPLEMENTING CULTURAL PROTOCOLS IN THE READING OF  
COLLABORATIVE INDIGENOUS LIFE WRITING**

My paper contributes to the theme 'Who Owns the Story?' and specifically addresses concerns relating to non-Indigenous academics reviewing and reading Indigenous life writing. My starting point is anthropologist Jeremy Beckett's observation that although his discipline has been radically reshaped by theoretical insights imported from the fields of philosophy, history, and literary and cultural criticism, it seems that the traffic is mostly one-way, and that critical thought in other disciplines rarely draws upon the advances made in anthropology. He implies that changes in the dynamics of fieldwork and the recognition of reciprocity and consultation in all aspects of research and writing with Indigenous communities are principles that other disciplines could learn from.

In this paper I will suggest that the reading of Indigenous life narratives by non-Indigenous academics and their subsequently published reviews and critiques of Indigenous life writing could benefit from the acknowledgement and implementation of Indigenous cultural protocols. Literary studies may be resistant to the notion that publishing commentary and interpretation of another's life narrative sets in motion an exchange whose consequences may exceed the printed page, yet as numerous Indigenous writers have asserted, consultation is a basic principle underlying any ethical exchange between non-Indigenous writers and Indigenous people.

'Consultation and Critique' presents a key outcome of my research focussing on the collaborative production of Indigenous life writing in Australia and Canada. As a non-Indigenous researcher, my entry into the Indigenous territories represented by the books I proposed to read and critique was facilitated by interviews with the producers of the texts. Consultation in my research began with these interviews and continued with the participants through to the finalising of each chapter of my thesis. Consultation involved speaking with each participant about his or her aspirations, concerns and understandings regarding the publication of the life writing text in question. My reading of the Indigenous texts became, therefore, collaborative – a result of ongoing dialogue and negotiation with their makers. My paper will discuss the implications of this negotiative reading process for the production of criticism directed towards Indigenous life writing texts.

**Biography:**

Michael Jacklin is a non-Indigenous researcher and writer. His PhD in Literary Studies, completed at Deakin University in 2004, asks whether critical readings of collaboratively produced Indigenous life writing, focussing on the analysis of power relationships, offer adequate treatment of the complexities of the production and circulation of collaborative texts. He is currently an Associate Research Fellow at the University of Wollongong. His published work has appeared in the journals *Australian Canadian Studies*, *Life Writing*, *New Literatures Review*, *Antipodes*, and *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*.

**Theme: Art and Politics**  
**Presenters: Vivien Johnson and Tess Allas**  
University of New South Wales

**BIOGRAPHY AND HISTORY**

What if Indigenous biography were approached not as an end in itself but as a means to the attainment of certain ends – the subjects' as well as the researchers'? The Storylines Project (aka This Side of the Frontier) aims to assemble the first comprehensive quantitative and qualitative data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander visual artists who operate outside the areas of Central and Northern Australia generally regarded as the heartlands of Indigenous art. The methodology of biographical data collection addresses the difficulties of conducting social research with subjects who are not only dispersed and disorganised but are 'on the whole, less attracted to social research.' (Macquarie Atlas of Indigenous Australia (p254).) Publication of their biographies on the Dictionary of Australian Artists Online (DAAO) website provides a strong utilitarian incentive for the artists' participation. On the other hand, the researchers' long range objective is to compile from biographical data on hundreds of lives a national picture of artists operating in 'settled Australia' that will help to transform their position in relation to both Indigenous Art and Australian Contemporary Art. The DAAO's complex template of search fields both facilitates linkages between individual biographies and enables detailed analysis across a range of demographically and art historically significant parameters. But how in practice is our subjects' desire for close and ongoing relationships with their biographers to be reconciled with the demands of data collection on such a vast scale? or the anecdotal impulse and the nuances and ambivalences of Indigenous lives with the DAAO's demand for definitiveness and the research's need for 'hard data'?

**Biography:**

Vivien Johnson is Editor-in-Chief of the Dictionary of Australian Artists Online and a New South Global Professor in the Faculties of Law, Arts and Social Sciences and College of Fine Arts, UNSW. Her book *Lives of the Papunya Tula Artists* will be published later this year by IAD Press Alice Springs. Tess Allas has worked in the area of Aboriginal visual art for 15 years and recently completed her MA in Curatorship and Modern Art. They are engaged in a 3 year ARC funded project documenting the 'non-remote' Indigenous artistic landscape through biographical data collection and publication.

**Theme: Mixed Identities**  
**Presenter: Sam Kaima**  
**Papua New Guinea**

**MAMBON OF WANTOAT: BREAKING BARRIERS AND IDENTITY**

This paper discusses problems of writing life stories in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and as examples gives two life stories written from Wantoat in Morobe Province. There is a need for a national biography, but at the same time there is a need for recording of life stories of local personalities and community leaders. Hopefully with local research activity these can contribute to national biography and identities of notable Papua New Guineans in future.

Wantoat is a remote part of Morobe province and was contacted late due to hostile tribes and mountainous terrains, but in due course one of the future leaders grew out of this area. Stephen Mambon was the first to be educated during the colonial era, the first to move outside of Wantoat for education, the first Interim premier of Morobe, and the first Wantoat to be elected to National Parliament of Papua New Guinea.

He deserves to be remembered and writing his story had been a challenge for me. What started of as informal discussions and story telling led to the production of a large biographical account of him waiting to be published. This paper gives as summary of problems encountered and anticipation of this biography, which is not only his story but a story of the District.

**Biography:**

Sam Kiama was a Senior Lecturer in Archives and Records Management at UPNG before joining the Law and Justice Sector as a records management consultant. He has BA (Hons) from UPNG, MA and a MLIS from University of Hawaii and a Post Graduate Diploma in Archives and Records from Monash University. He has written and presented papers at international conferences in the Pacific, especially in Pacific History and Politics conferences.

**Theme: Art and Politics**  
**Presenter: Dale Kerwin**  
Griffith University

## RE-CONTEXTUALISE QUEENSLAND HISTORY WITH AN ABORIGINAL PRESENCE

The project aims to reconstruct the life-experiences of Aboriginal people and illuminate their contribution to the history of Queensland from the beginnings of colonial settlement in 1824 to era of Federation. To date, Aboriginal people generally continue to be represented in Queensland historiography as nameless collectivities, whose historical significance has been appraised in terms of the degree to which they contributed to or resisted the development of settler society. Through carefully contextualized study of a range of archival records, published sources and, importantly, oral histories, this project aims to bring to light the life-histories and achievements of Aboriginal people, in ways that will accord them their rightful place in history, and reveal the true richness and complexities of cross-cultural relations during Queensland's colonial era.

This project addresses Aboriginal peoples' demand to be accorded their rightful place in Australian history. As such it will powerfully enhance health and wellbeing amongst Aboriginal people, by generating research outcomes that reconnect them with a vital dimension to their cultural heritage: the lives and achievements of their *ngengampi* (heroes, diplomats). These outcomes will have particular benefit for Indigenous educators in their efforts to develop curriculum materials that offer younger Aboriginal people culturally appropriate role models and guides for life.

Bio for Dale Kerwin

### **Biography:**

Dale Kerwin is a proud Goori (Aboriginal) man from the Worimi Nation, New South Wales. He is passionate about Aboriginal rights to ownership and management for cultural heritage resources. When Aboriginal people were liberated in the late 1960's and educational institutions were opened to Aboriginal people he went and enrolled in tertiary studies at beginning with TAFE in the mid 80's. He has since achieved over a 20-year period a Diploma of Primary Teaching, Graduate Diploma of Museum Studies and Cultural Heritage Management, Masters of Philosophy, thesis- *Whose Rights: Aboriginal Rights for Tangible and Intangible Property*. He has also just recently been awarded a PhD for his study of Aboriginal trading paths, thesis- *Aboriginal Dreaming Tracks or Trading Paths: The Common Ways*.

He remains committed to furthering knowledges about Aboriginal cultural heritage and taking Aboriginal people from the footnote of Australian history to being inscribed on the body of Australian history.

**Theme: Controversial Lives**  
**Presenter: Kuela Kiema**  
**Botswana, Africa**

**THE ABSTRACT OF A BOOK MANUSCRIPT**  
**Tears for My Land**

**The pains and agonies of spiritual disconnection from tribal territories**

We are called Bushmen, San, Khoisan, Hunter-Gatherer and many other foreign Names. We do not have control over all these identities. We can not reject these names for we have no powers to do so.

The foreign identities do not come to us alone but in accompany of social deprivation and economic exclusions. We the Bushmen are the poorest of all the poor in Botswana and Southern Africa in general. The Government handouts are all that we depend on in the form of food rations and other welfare services. We remain the least represented in the current political dispensation. The Bushmen are facing fierce social discrimination at schools, work, and other social institutions of human life.

The Bushmen are kept as serves in cattle posts of the dominant Bantu groups or farm labourers working under appalling conditions. Poverty is deep and hidden on farms where most of the workers are the Bushmen. The plight of farm workers is not an issue to policy makers. Minimum wages for farm workers is not discussed in decision making forums.

The root cause of all the problems experienced by the Bushmen is the loss of their land and resources to the Bantu agro pastoralists and the white commercial ranchers. Undoubtedly the Bushmen are the indigenous people of southern Africa who had been dependent on hunting and gathering over large areas of land. The Bushmen used bow and poisoned arrow to shoot wild animals for subsistence. The Bushmen gathered fruits roots, which contributed more 75% of their daily diet. However with the arrival of the Bantu and whites the Bushmen had lost all their land and livelihood. Some of their land belonging to the Bushmen had been made National Parks from which the Bushmen have are forced out.

The traditional tribal territory of the Dcui and Dxana Bushmen were converted into a Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR) in 1961 by the British colonial government without the consent of the inhabitants of the land. The post-colonial government of the independent Botswana decided to relocate the Bushmen out of their tribal land. The Dxana and Dcui Bushmen have been relocated since 1997. There are however some pockets of resistance. The recent High Court ruling bears a testimony to this. The loss of land, and livelihoods had not only affected the economic aspect of the lives of the Bushmen but have adverse affects on their culture and ethnic identities. The Bushmen are struggling to regain their traditional cultural norms and values which are at the verge of extinction.

I was born and raised in Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR). I went to school in Xade primary and obtained my first degree from the University of Namibia. I am a Dcui speaker who had also suffered the loss of my tribal territories and ethnic erosion. I am currently working on a book manuscript trying to put the experiences of the loss of our land from which the Botswana government had displaced us. The initial title of the book is *Tears for My Land, The Pains and Agonies of Spiritual Disconnection from Tribal Territories*. If given an opportunity I would love to share with other indigenous people the Botswana Bushmen's side of the indigenous stories.

**Biography:**

Kuela Kiema is from Botswana southern Africa. He is a Dcui speaking Bushmen, who was relocated from Central Kalahari Game Reserve in 1997 and now residing in a new settlement called New Xade. He holds a Diploma in Secondary Education in Mathematics and is a Music Teacher. He has a BA Degree in Sociology. He works for Letloa Trust as a Community Development Worker. Kuela is a traditional Musician, a hunter with poisoned bow and arrow, as well as hunter on horse back, a craftsman, making leather jackets, bags, skin mats etc. He believes in the power and the presence of the living-dead (ancestors).

**Theme: Alternative Narratives**  
**Presenters: David Lloyd & Angela Blakely**  
**Griffith University**

**JUSTICE DENIED**

Traditionally, research of the human condition has been limited to exploring the rational domain. This is the domain in which the practice of humanity is more easily captured, recorded and analysed. In addition, this domain provides the data that lends itself more easily to measurement and dissemination through text. The non-rational and fluid components of the human experience have been overlooked as fleeting, transient and lacking intelligence. Yet, arguably, these are the traits that characterise the human condition. In the latter part of the C20th theorists argued for a broadening of research methodologies and sought to acknowledge the importance of the affective domain in qualifying human patterns. They argued against the appropriateness of the scientific model within such research contexts and questioned the over-reliance on text to disseminate the knowledge derived. Further, they positioned research of the human condition as a subjective observation that must acknowledge the relationship and dependency existing between the researcher and the researched.

Photo documentary practice (visual stills), a discipline that blends ethnographic research methodologies, investigative journalism and the politic of the aesthetic, relies on visual images to capture emotional experiences of both the researcher and their subjects. And while documentary practice is as old or older than other qualitative research methodologies, it is only recently that it, and other forms of the visual and creative arts, have been considered as legitimate research methodologies.

'Justice Denied' is a biographical (visual and text) paper that tells the stories of Indigenous people. In 2006 Blakely and Lloyd completed an in-field trip working with indigenous youth in a regional town in northern Queensland. Through interview, documentary images and commentary by the authors, *We're talking...anyone listening?* gives voice to this marginalized group. Using a similar methodology, Blakely and Lloyd returned to Rwanda last year to collect and tell the stories of survivors of the Rwanda Genocide 12yrs on. 'Never Again' builds on the work produced from the commission they received to document aspects of the Rwanda Crisis in 1994. 'Justice Denied' raises issues concerning visual ethnography as well as provides a conduit through which the stories of marginalized people may be told.

**Biography:**

David Lloyd and Angela Blakely lecture in photojournalism and documentary practice at Griffith University. For over ten years they have worked, individually and collaboratively, on a number of projects that have ranged from conflict areas to personal crises. In 2006 they returned to Rwanda and began collecting stories (visual and text) of the survivors of the 1994 genocide who are denied justice through the pragmatics of local politics and the indifference of the international community. Back in Australia they went to Mount Isa and completed the project 'We're talking...anyone listening?' The project tells the story of some of the marginalized and indigenous youths involved in substance abuse in regional Queensland. Whether working collaboratively or alone, Blakely and Lloyd argue documentary practice as an intersection of investigative journalism, ethnography and the politics of aesthetics.

**Theme: Elusive Relationships**

**Presenter: Pat Lowe**

**Broome, WA**

### **THE DILEMMAS OF KNOWING TOO MUCH**

When I was writing the story of Jimmy Pike's early life in the desert, I not only had notes of conversations and recordings in Jimmy's own words, I had also lived with him for sixteen years. The privileges of a spouse raised certain dilemmas, especially after Jimmy had died: how much of what he had told me in private would he have wanted to appear in his biography? How much of it would his relations want to appear? Should I take other people's sensitivities into account? I knew Jimmy didn't mind his sometimes bad behaviour being made known, but what about the bad behaviour of his companions, especially those who had survived him? What about matters touching cultural beliefs or practices, or stories that could be used as fuel for prejudice? The choice seemed to be between writing an anodyne version of Jimmy's life as a noble savage or, to the best of my ability, telling it as it was.

#### **Biography:**

After a brief career as a secondary school teacher in France and East Africa, Pat Lowe obtained a first class degree in psychology at the University of Liverpool in the UK, and migrated to Western Australia in 1972. She undertook a Master's Degree and started work in WA prisons, moving to Broome in 1979. Here she met Aboriginal artist Jimmy Pike and some years later went to live with him at his camp in the Great Sandy Desert, where she started writing seriously. She collaborated with Pike on a number of books until his death in 2002. Pat's most recent book is *In the Desert: Jimmy Pike as a Boy* (Penguin Books, 2007).

**Theme: Pauline McLeod**  
**Presenter: Simon Luckhurst**  
University of Technology, Sydney

**PAULINE MCLEOD- THE MAGPIE WHO BECAME A SWAN- FINDING SALVATION IN CULTURE**

Pauline McLeod left an archive of 34 boxes of writing: poems, diaries, notes, playscripts, film ideas and letters. Amongst this material was also some of the ephemera of her life: bus tickets and electricity bills and birthday cards. I have been literally 'unpacking' Pauline's work, scanning anything I think could be included in an autobiographical construct. I have completed this process, and am now thoroughly examining the remaining material, to refine and assemble it to tell her life. The final result will be in the form of a collage, or series of fragments, of Pauline's own words. There is more than enough in this material to tell a totally coherent and cogent story of her life. The story that will emerge will describe how she was fostered, what life in her foster family was like, how she met her natural family and how her foster family disowned her after this took place as well as her subsequent battle with mental illness which sometimes left her institutionalised. It will also cover her discovery of Aboriginal culture, and how she came to rely on this both for strength and for her career as a storyteller and writer. In this paper I will look at what brought Pauline down (the ramifications of her removal and subsequent loss of her foster family while coping with her mental illness) as well as what lifted her up (finding strength and solace in Aboriginal culture) as well as describing how she saw this culture and her relationship to it.

**Biography:**

Simon Luckhurst is a writer, researcher and journalist. He has produced a number of short films and is the author of several plays, as well as *Eddie's Country* (Magabala Books, 2006), an account of the death in police custody of Eddie Murray in 1981. More than just the story of this case, it is also a history of Eddie's family which begins at the time of first contact with Aboriginal people in northwest NSW and continues until the end of the last Inquiry into Eddie's death, which occurred in 2003. Simon is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Technology, Sydney. More information on Simon is available at [www.simonluckhurst.com](http://www.simonluckhurst.com)

**Theme: Who Owns the Story?**  
**Presenter: Gaynor Macdonald**  
University of Sydney

**SPEAKING FOR, SPEAKING TOGETHER: NEGOTIATING THE INTERCULTURAL SPACE OF AUTHORSHIP,  
VALUES AND HISTORIES**

As the non-Indigenous author of three texts (which include and extend beyond auto/biography) which speak of and to Indigenous peoples, two of which have Indigenous co-authors, my paper examines the challenges of working across knowledges, histories and epistemologies. This includes the dilemmas posed by the politics of authorship, intellectual property, writing and publishing styles, and the demands of the academy. In particular, I explore what it means to write so that non-Indigenous voices are not only present but able to be heard in their own terms; and how different interpretations in co-authored work can be managed.

**Biography:**

Gaynor Macdonald is a senior lecturer in Anthropology at the University of Sydney and her work is currently focused on Wiradjuri experiences of modernity, especially the recent impact of neo-liberalist economic policy on Aboriginal social and cultural life. She has an interest in writing for as well as about Wiradjuri people. Recent publications attracting attention include land rights history and politics in NSW, the role of photos in mediating social change, and expressions of violence in contemporary art. Her consultancy work includes native title, environmental impacts, government and legal work.

**Theme: Mixed Identities**  
**Presenter: M J Mafela**  
University of South Africa

**THE REVELATION OF AFRICAN CULTURE IN *LONG WALK TO FREEDOM***

*Long Walk to Freedom* recreates the drama of the experiences that helped shape Nelson Mandela's destiny (Mandela 1994). Throughout his life, Mandela has fought for justice, freedom, goodness and love. The narrative is a story about Mandela and the struggle of African people in South Africa. Therefore, the autobiography can be categorised as a historical narrative or a political biography because it deals with matters affecting the nation.

Reading through this autobiography, one does not only come across the story of Nelson Mandela and the struggle of the nation towards freedom, but also cultural matters pertaining to the Africans. Besides revealing the oppression Mandela and Africans in South Africa experienced, *Long Walk to Freedom* reveals many aspects of African culture in his narrative. For example, he reveals cultural matters affecting marriages, the running of the homestead, life of a boy in rural areas and kinship relations.

The focus of this presentation is on kinship relation among the Africans as revealed in the narrative. Kinship relation is practised differently from one culture to the other. In going about narrating his story, Mandela reveals kinship relation among the Africans mainly to enable non-Africans to have background information towards understanding the line of action in the narrative. Failure to understand kinship relations among the Africans can lead a reader who is non-African not to have a clear understanding of some of the actions in the narrative. Concepts such as *brother, sister, uncle, aunt, cousin, etc.* do not denote the same meaning as they are found in English and other cultures. For example, those who may be called cousins in English may not be cousins according to the African culture. Besides writing about his story and the story of the South African nation and their struggle, he also emphasises the element of kinship relation in his narrative. Therefore, the aim of the paper is to highlight kinship relation as revealed in the autobiography of Nelson Mandela.

**Biography:**

Munzhedzi James Mafela is a Professor of African Languages in the School of Arts, Education and Language Communication: College of Human Sciences at the University of South Africa (UNISA). His field of specialisation is African Literature and Culture, and Lexicography. He holds a D.Litt. et Phil in African Languages from the University of South Africa. His research focused on African literature. Among the lexicographical courses he completed is the SALEX Lexicographical Training Course held at the Dictionary Unit for South African English, which he completed at Rhodes University in 1977. He is also an author of creative writing in Tshivenya (one of the 11 South African official languages).

**Theme: Controversial Lives**  
**Presenter: John Maynard**  
University of Newcastle

### **TAKING CHARGE OF OUR OWN DESTINY – IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF FRED MAYNARD**

This paper critically examines the change and perception of Indigenous autobiographies and biographies across the past half-century with a strong emphasis on the political context. It reflects my own journey into academic life and my work which has focussed on the life and times of my grandfather Fred Maynard a high profile Aboriginal activist of the 1920s. What is crucial in this examination is the knowledge that much of the inspiring story of these early Aboriginal activists was lost, forgotten or erased for more than fifty years. Therefore my discussion explores Australian history and the absence for so long of an Aboriginal place in that history, and the process over the past thirty years in correcting that fiction. During the 1960s and 1970s the Aboriginal presence in Australian history for so long erased, overlooked or ignored was suddenly a topic worthy of wider attention and importance. But despite all that has been published since – we have not realistically even touched the surface of what is buried within both the archives and oral memory. And quite clearly what has been recovered, remains largely embedded within a white viewpoint of the past.

#### **Biography:**

Professor John Maynard is the Chair of Aboriginal Studies/Head of Wollotuka, School of Aboriginal Studies at the University of Newcastle. he is an Australian Research Council post-doctoral fellow and a Director of Council with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) in Canberra. His traditional roots lie with the Worimi people of Port Stephens - New South Wales. He was the recipient of the Aboriginal History (ANU) Stanner Fellowship for 1996 and the New South Wales Premiers Indigenous History Fellowship for 2003-04. He gained his PhD in 2003 examining the rise of early Aboriginal political activism. John was a member of the Executive Committee of the Australian Historical Association 2000-2002 and has worked with and within many Aboriginal communities urban, rural and remote. He is the author of four books including Aboriginal Stars of the Turf.

**Theme: Controversial Lives**  
**Presenter: Dr George Mukuka**  
University of Johannesburg, South Africa

**CLASHES OF WORLDVIEWS – THE EXPERIENCES OF THE FOURTH INDIGENOUS CATHOLIC PRIEST IN SOUTH AFRICA: FR JULIUS uMKOMAZI MBHELE: 1879–1956**

The paper presents a case study of the fourth indigenous Catholic priest in South Africa, Fr Julius uMkomazi Mbhele. He was born in 1879 into the Amabela tribe. In 1899 he entered the Collegium romanum in Rome. Using James C. Scott's concept of the 'public' and the 'hidden transcripts', the paper tries to go beyond the mere description of events and analyse the misunderstandings between missionaries and the indigenous clergy in South Africa. Some background on Fr Mbele is given, leading up to his ordination in 1907 in Rome. Upon his return, Julius Mbhele was involved in mission work at Mariannhill from 1907 to 1924 and later he moved to the Diocese of Zululand. His work as a priest is critically examined using oral history methodology. In the process archival and oral sources are critically analysed to access the controversial aspect of his biography. The article tries to evaluate the causes of the problems which Fr Mbele experienced in the early years of his ministry and briefly relates this to the present context.

**Biography:**

Dr George Mukuka is at the Faculty of Arts, Design and Architecture, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

**Theme: Art and Politics**  
**Presenter: Margo Neale**  
National Museum of Australia

**THE ENIGMA OF EMILY: ART REFLECTS LIFE**

A curator, like a writer must stage and script a biography with both the subject and the audience in mind.

Emily Kame Kngwarreye's story on the other hand, confounds all stereotypes on many sides of the cultural divide and upsets conventional wisdom to the point that to place Emily anywhere in known categories poses enormous contradictions creating fertile if enigmatic discourse.

Aboriginal ceremonial leader and artist from Utopia, Northern Territory, 250 kilometres north east of Alice Springs, Emily Kame Kngwarreye is arguably Australia's foremost contemporary artist of international stature. Yet she spoke little about her art, in English at least. For her, talking about her paintings was other people's business; business that raises intriguing cross-cultural issues involving the poetics and politics of curating across cultures.

But amidst the apparent disparity Emily Kame Kngwarreye is hailed as a genius, raising many questions such as; How can we reconcile Emily as the international modernist artist with Emily the senior Anmatyerre custodian? What does this say about us as an audience? And what is it that we can say about her life as reflected in her art?

In this presentation, I intend to deal with these questions and others including the inexorable debate of how do curators present contemporary Indigenous art, in a white cube formalist context without subscribing to the Namatjira phenomena of 'the-primitive who-learnt-how-to-paint' like a white man. How does one move between the two deep ends of assimilating Emily's art into mainstream and marginalizing it separately as 'other'?

**Biography:**

Margo Neale, of Aboriginal and Irish descent, is a Senior Curator and Principal Advisor to the Director (Indigenous matters) at the National Museum of Australia where she is curating a major international exhibition on Emily Kame Kngwarreye. She is Adjunct Professor in the History Program at ANU attached to the Centre for Indigenous History where she is working with Prof. Ann McGrath and Frances Peters-Little on an ARC project entitled, 'Indigenous modes of Historic Practice' - in other words, 'how blackfellas tell history' in non-text based genres.

The work of Emily Kame Kngwarreye is one such example.

**Theme: Controversial Lives**  
**Presenter: Fiona Paisley**  
Griffith University

**TOY SKELETONS: THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS AND STREET PROTEST OF ANTHONY MARTIN FERNANDO, ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIAN ACTIVIST AND COMMENTATOR IN INTERWAR EUROPE**

Already a middle aged man, in the early years of the twentieth century Aboriginal activist and traveller Anthony Martin Fernando left Australia in protest of the treatment of his people by white settlers, by the judicial system, and by government officials. Over the next four decades he lived and worked in various European countries where he continued to protest Aboriginal status and conditions whenever and wherever he could. We know about Fernando's life of protest through a series of archival moments: for example, as a prisoner of war in Austria during World War One, as an interviewee of a Swiss newspaper, as a petitioner of the League of Nations, and later, as a street activist picketing Australia House and as a voice of resistance speaking defiantly from the dock at the Old Bailey.

This paper considers the many ways in which Fernando's life of protest in exile confronts our assumptions about the history of Aboriginal protest in the twentieth century, both in terms of its mobility and asserted cosmopolitanism, and in his determination to internationalise the question of indigenous rights. At the same time, it points to the continuity between his calls for land, education and employment and those made by previous and contemporary Aboriginal spokespeople as they sought to negotiate a viable and just future for their people. In particular, this paper sets out to interrogate the discourse of genocide mobilised by Fernando as he sought to impress upon his largely white audiences the urgent need for support for a concerted, world intervention into Australian settler colonialism.

**Biography:**

Fiona Paisley lectures in cultural history at Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia. Her book *Loving Protection? Australian Feminism and Aboriginal Women's Rights, 1919-1939* was published in 2000, and she co-edited *Uncommon Ground: White Women in Aboriginal History* in 2005. Currently completing a monograph on the politics of cultural internationalism and the performance of racial diversity at the Pan-Pacific Women's Association from the 1920s to the 1950s, Fiona has published widely on settler colonialism in trans-national context, as well as on empire and masculinity, childhood, gender, and modernity.

**Biography:**

Frances Peters-Little is a Kamilaroi/Uralarai woman and Research Fellow at the ANU. She is also the Acting Director of the Australian Centre for Indigenous History and the Chairperson of the Indigenous Working Party with the Australian Dictionary of Biography. Before coming to Canberra, she was a filmmaker for the ABC and left in 1995 after working on more than 18 documentaries as researcher, producer and director. Today Frances Peters-Little spends most of her time writing, and is currently working on her second book, the official biography on the life of her father, Jimmy Little, which is expected to be published by ABC Books.

**Biography:**

Peter Read is a historian at the University of Sydney. He is the author of *Charles Perkins A Biography*, and is currently working on a biography of the Stolen generations elder Joy Janaka Williams. It was through Link Up (NSW), in which he was a former worker, that he met both Janaka and Pauline McLeod. He was instrumental in finding Pauline's family and taking her home.

## Theme: Alternative Narratives

Presenter: Mina Sakai

Japan

### A MESSAGE FROM ONE YOUNG AINU WOMAN TO FELLOW AINU, AND TO SOCIETY AS A WHOLE

Self-expression among the Ainu, the indigenous people of Japan, is currently in transition as more and more Ainu people become active in generating their own stories as opposed to producing them at the request of researchers and scholars.

However, there are many obstacles still facing Ainu people in their efforts of self-expression and assertion of their rights. The Japanese government has yet to recognize the Ainu as indigenous people, while many majority ethnic Japanese have little or no awareness of the Ainu and their existence. Furthermore, historical policies of assimilation have led to a cycle of self-negation among the Ainu, preventing open discussion of many issues relating to Ainu identity and 'self.'

Within this framework, I would like to particularly address issues of bodily aesthetics and standards of beauty within Japanese society as they relate to the Ainu, and their correlation to identity and self-expression. I hope that this will not only provide an understanding of the issues faced by the Ainu, but will also provide insight into larger issues of body, identity, and self among indigenous and minority populations.

#### **Biography:**

Mina Sakai is currently the leader of 'Ainu Rebels,' a group of young Ainu in the greater Tokyo metropolitan area. Born to an Ainu father and Japanese mother, she was raised in the Ainu community in Hokkaido, Japan. From a young age, she has been trained in both traditional Ainu dancing and contemporary modern dance. She is also a Cultural Advisor registered with the government-established Foundation for Research and Promotion of Ainu Culture. She continues to be active in spreading awareness on the Ainu and culture through dance performances as well as sharing her life story throughout Japan. She is currently working on producing her own autobiography in the hopes of providing a voice for Ainu youth in modern Japanese society.

**Theme: Elusive Relationships**  
**Presenter: Barrina South**  
University of Western Sydney, and the Australian Museum

**TIDDAS' AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVES – REINSCRIBING IDENTITY AND HISTORY THROUGH UNCOVERING HIDDEN KNOWLEDGE**

My decision to explore Tiddas' narratives and the role they play in making the invisible knowledge, experience and history of Aboriginal women from New South Wales visible was prompted by observations made whilst working in a large Australian cultural institution. It was there I became aware of the under-representation, even absence, of Tiddas' knowledge and experiences when compared with other Indigenous women from such areas as the Northern Territory, Central Australia and Queensland.

Generally, Tiddas' narratives are overlooked, dismissed or ignored and, when asked if people know of or have read these narratives, the common response is 'No', yet these narratives play an important role in the telling of Tiddas' shifting role to a more focal position in their communities and the promotion of political action. They also assist in aiding the healing process for Indigenous community members searching or seeking to understand their Aboriginal identity and contribute towards a more equitable understanding of New South Wales history with their discussion of oppressive government policy and the establishment of government-run Reserves.

In this paper, through a selection of seven published Tiddas' narratives and a recently completed oral autobiographical narrative with an Aboriginal Elder, Aunty June Barker the aim is to identify the strengths of Tiddas' narratives, to demonstrate that bringing together Western and Aboriginal knowledge, with equal recognition of their value, creates a more complete discussion of New South Wales history and to increase knowledge about government missions in New South Wales, particular from an Aboriginal woman's perspective.

I argue that the combination of these eight narratives acts as a counter-discourse to the dominant and established historiographies based on Western epistemologies and ontologies and challenges mainstream understandings of Tiddas' knowledge and experience.

The altering of the status quo is achieved by Tiddas' decision to harness Western institutions of publication to document the previously repressed, hidden or ignored knowledge and experience of Aboriginality, spirituality, gender-orientated themes, language and political message and thus reinscribe identity and history. By stating, 'I was there, this is how it was – listen, learn, understand', Tiddas' narratives are able to present a more equitable account of Australian history and contribute to the process of cultural transformation in contemporary Australia.

**Biography:**

Barrina South has recently completed a MA (Hons) 'Tiddas' autobiographical narratives - Reinscribing identity and history through uncovering hidden knowledge' where she argued that the combination of eight Tiddas' narratives acts as a counter-discourse to the dominant and established historiographies based on Western epistemologies and ontologies and challenges mainstream understandings of Tiddas' knowledge and experience.

She has been writing a biography on one of our well-respected Elders, Aunty June Barker, and her experiences of living on the Brewarrina Mission. The manuscript was short listed for the 2006 Arts Queensland's David Unaipon Literary Award. For the past 12 years Ms South has been working in the Anthropology Division at the Australian Museum and has had vast experience in documenting intangible heritage, writing text on Indigenous peoples and cultures for exhibitions and publications.

**Theme: Alternative Narratives**  
**Presenter: Maria Preethi Srinivasan**  
University of New South Wales

**A DALIT AND A FIRST NATIONS CANADIAN SPEAK OF THE WOMEN IN THEIR BONES**

Globalization is criticized for its capitalist orientation: it is resisted by the poor and oppressed people in every nation. However, there is an equally spirited response in riding the wave to escape being submerged by it! Oppressed groups, the world over are taking advantage of connectivity, which is boon of globalization. The solidarity of the oppressed is what emerges from all these attempts to connect and communicate.

In my presentation, I hope to forge one such link between Dalit writer Bama and Native Canadian, Lee Maracle. Bama's *Sangati* (which means news, events, or happenings), originally written in Tamil and translated into English by Lakshmi Holmstrom, finds resonance with Lee Maracle's *I Am Woman*. Both of them employ the first person narrative in presenting the lives of the women of their respective communities. Bama writes about the women of her village and her book has been described as 'the autobiography of a community'. As committed writers they demand recognition of the humanity of the Native woman/Dalit woman. These writers reflect on the nature of patriarchy in their respective contexts. Bama's portraits reveal that the issues facing Dalit women are of a different order from those facing upper caste women. Bama's vignettes could very well illustrate the concept of 'Dalit feminism'. *I Am Woman* is created by the strength of an insight into the colonial process that comes exclusively from the position of being native and woman. Maracle's writing presents a deep study of the link between racism and sexism and Bama's *Sangati* is powerful in drawing attention to the question of caste and gender. In the post-Durban scenario, Dalits are claiming the attention of the international community in demanding recognition of casteism as racism. Colonialism and casteism are two 'scattered hegemonies' whose operation this paper explores. Globalisation presents not merely the opportunity but the necessity for a transnational study. The translation of Bama's writings into English and French and the invitations she receives to International Conferences and bookfairs calls for a location of her writings in a transnational framework. It is also necessitated by the fact that Dalits are internationalizing Dalit issues and also seeking 'imagined communities' as evidenced by the Dalit Panthers who chose to be named so drawing inspiration from the Black Panthers. There are points of convergence in Bama and Maracle with regard to narrative style and commitment to represent the Native/Dalit woman. *Sangati* and *I Am Woman* are scripted by the overwhelming desire to effect social change. Maracle acknowledges in her text her indebtedness to 'a myriad of Native people, Palestinians, Chileans, Philipinos.....Anti-apartheid activists.' whom she refers to as 'the world of struggle' who work towards 'a new humanity'. *Sangati*, by virtue of its many and exciting points of intersection and 'difference' with Maracle's *I Am Woman* includes Dalits in that 'world of struggle'. 'Transnational feminism' which advocates a 'multinational and multilocational approach to the question of gender' provides scope for that inclusion and thereby the theorization of the Dalit experience in a global context.

**Biography:**

Maria Preethi Srinivasan, a research scholar at the Department of English, University of Madras, developed an interest in Australian Aboriginal Literature, with the help of the modest collection of books at the Australian Study Centre at her University. She works under the supervision of Prof. C.T. Indra, Professor and Head, Department of English, University of Madras. At UNSW her research is supervised by Prof. Anne Brewster. Maria has presented five papers at international conferences on Australian Studies in India. Three of them have been published. She won the Endeavour Asia Award for the year 2006, sponsored by DEST, Government of Australia. Under the aegis of the award she is a visiting scholar at UNSW, Sydney, till October 2007. Her research toward a PhD is a transnational study of Australian Aboriginal and Indian Dalit and Adivasi Women's life stories. The title of her research project is *Sagas of Empowerment: Literature of Difference*.

**Theme: Controversial Lives**  
**Presenter: Sue Taffe**  
**Monash University**

**FIGHTING FRIENDSHIPS: ACTIVISTS ACROSS DIVIDES, 1950s–1980s**

What is the role of friendships among activists working for social and political change? In the period from the 1950s to the 1980s friendships between Aboriginal rights activists were crucial in a number of ways. Six such friendships across divides– geographic, ethnic and cultural, form the basis of the project I will be speaking about. This work builds on research for my *Black and White Together, FCAATSI: the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, 1958-1973*, (UQP, 2005), but the focus is on the role on the personal in these activists' lives as it affects their political activism.

The friendships to be explored are as follows: Mary Bennett and Shirley Andrews, Jessie Street and Faith Bandler, Stan Davey and Doug Nicholls, Barry Christophers and Joe McGinness, Gladys O'Shane and Pauline Pickford, Oodgeroo Noonuccal and Judith Wright..

This paper will focus on two of these friendships. Gladys O'Shane, president of the Cairns Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advancement League (CATSIAL) met Pauline Pickford, honorary secretary of the Melbourne-based Council for Aboriginal Rights (CAR) when they were campaigning to expose an illegal flogging on the Hopevale Mission in 1961. While Gladys' tragic early death in 1965 cut short this particular friendship, Pauline's relationship with Gladys' children continued. Joe McGinness, secretary of CATSIAL met Barry Christophers in the same year when Christophers, impressed by McGinness quiet dignity, nominated him as president of the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement. These two men campaigned together through the 1960s. They became firm friends and were both campaigning together and going on bush camping trips until Joe's death in 2003.

The Cairns waterfront and the role of the culture of the left in the Indigenous activism in Cairns from the late 1950s through the 1970s is of particular significance in these two relationships. How did race and class intersect in these friendships? What part was played by ideology? Did these factors weaken or strengthen over time? Is the divide between those 'born of the conquerors' and the dispossessed crossed in these friendships? If so, how?

**Biography:**

Sue Taffe is the author of *Black and White Together, FCAATSI: the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, 1958-1973*. She has just completed a post doctoral fellowship in the School of Historical Studies at Monash University. One of the outcomes of this is a website – 'Collaborating for Indigenous Rights' which is being hosted by the National Museum of Australia. The first section of this site, concerning the decade-long campaign for Constitutional amendment, is now public at [www.nma.gov.au/indigenoustrights](http://www.nma.gov.au/indigenoustrights). Two further sections are still to be released. Work continues with National Museum curators in preparing an exhibition on the civil rights campaigns of the 1960s. Sue is working as a consultant historian with the National Museum of Australia and Reconciliation Australia. She is a research fellow in the Centre for Australian Indigenous Studies, Monash University.

**Theme: Alternative Narratives**  
**Presenter: Peter G. Toner**  
St. Thomas University, Canada

### **NEW MEDIA, MEMORY, AND YOLNGU (AUTO)BIOGRAPHICAL DISCOURSES**

This paper is based on the repatriation of digital copies of archival field recordings of music back to their communities of origin in northeast Arnhem Land, Australia, and the kinds of discourses which were generated as these recordings took on a new social life. Upon hearing the voices of their fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers, for the first time in decades or perhaps for the first time ever, Yolngu people used these new media as a catalyst for memories of their ancestors and for the generation of a range of biographical oral narratives. These primarily took the form of stories about individual singers, but rapidly expanded into narratives about past musical practices and the past more generally. This process also opened up a space for autobiography as listeners situated their own life stories with reference to the technologically mediated voices of their deceased relatives. This paper will examine the nature of both the biographical and the autobiographical narratives generated through the repatriation of archival recordings, and will consider some of the new uses made of the voices of the past.

#### **Biography:**

Peter Toner is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology at St. Thomas University in Fredericton, Canada. His doctoral research at the Australian National University examined music and social identity in the Yolngu community of Gapuwiyak, N.T. His postdoctoral research, also at the ANU, involved the digitisation and repatriation of almost 400 hours of archival field recordings of music back to their Yolngu communities of origin, and examined the social life of these important objects of cultural heritage. In addition to maintaining these research interests, he is currently involved in a new research project on folk music and Irish identity in his native Canadian province of New Brunswick.

**Presenter: Jaelea Skehan**  
**Hunter Institute of Mental Health**

**COVERING SUICIDE AND MENTAL ILLNESS:  
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES WHEN PORTRAYING INDIGENOUS LIVES**

Mindframe is the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing's National strategy for promoting responsible and accurate reporting of suicide and mental illness in the media. The strategy is multi-faceted and guided by the National Media and Mental Health Group, giving credibility to the strategy within both the media and mental health sector.

In Australia about 1% of our population die by suicide each year and one in five people will be affected by mental illness in their lifetime. Historically, media organisations have shied away from covering sensitive topics such as suicide, mental illness and mental health. However, the world in which we live has changed and communities more prepared to openly discuss these issues than they once were. Research about media coverage of suicide and mental illness has shown the potential for both positive and negative effects. With an increased interest in these topics within the community, it is important for people working within the media to be informed about the ways in which certain information can either harm or benefit their audience.

Those involved with the Indigenous Lives 2007 Conference may be in a unique position to not only reduce harm in their writing and programs, but also promote positive social and emotional well being by exploring concerns for Indigenous Australians and the broader community. Within your conference section 'Issues in Presentation as Autobiography' for media, we propose conducting a workshop which will explore both general issues related to the coverage of suicide and mental illness as well as specific issues faced by those portraying the lives of Indigenous Australians. The workshop will draw on experiences from working with both Indigenous media and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia.

**Outline of the session:**

**Purpose:** To provide Indigenous biographers and those working within the associated media with an opportunity to discuss and explore issues involved in reporting suicide and mental illness and the possible negative and positive effects of this coverage on their particular communities.

**Duration:** 1 hour

**Aim:** The main aim of the workshop is to outline some of the available research evidence about the impact of covering these issues, some facts and statistics about suicide and mental illness in Indigenous communities and to engage writers and media in a discussion about the complexities involved in reporting on such sensitive issues. The information provided in the session and in the resources (available at [www.mindframe-media.info](http://www.mindframe-media.info)) is intended to support broadcasters to make informed decisions about how to cover stories related to suicide and mental illness. It is also a great opportunity to gain valuable feedback from those working in Indigenous communities about the difficulties faced when asked to develop a story involving these topics.

**Biography:**

Jaelea Skehan, Mindframe Program Manager, forms part of the management team at the Hunter Institute of Mental Health in Newcastle NSW and currently coordinates five projects under the National Mindframe Initiative. These projects engage with media professionals, journalism educators, journalism students, the mental health and suicide prevention sector, those involved in Australian film and television drama and law enforcement agencies, sharing the common goal of promoting responsible and accurate reporting of suicide.

**Theme: Who Owns the Story?**  
**Presenter: Mona Ngitji Ngitji Tur**  
**Unaipon School, UNISA**

**ONLY A BRIDGE**

*Only a Bridge*, is an autobiography of my life as an Yankunytjatjara and Irish women born in the 1930s Assimilation era in Australia. My story celebrates my life journey from childhood to adulthood. I will share my memories, celebrations, and personal accounts of being born from a Yankunytjatjara mother and Irish Father in the bush north-west of South Australia. I will highlight my experience of being sent to Adelaide as a domestic and my personal journey between two worlds Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. This paper will highlight influences that have shaped my life including hiding from the police so I would not be stolen, memories of my mother and father, surviving mental illness, my cultural and spiritual life, marrying a Polish man, interpreting for my community and my life as an Elder.

The paper will share the process that I have undertaken to bring to life my story *Only a Bridge*.

**Biography:**

Ngitji Ngitji (Anangu name meaning Cicada) Mona Tur nee Kennedy is from the Yankunytjatjara language group where she was born at Hamilton Bore in northern South Australia in 1936. Ngitji Ngitji is an interpreter in Yankunytjatjara and Pitjantjatjara for courts, hospitals, universities, schools, and prisons. Ngitji Ngitji was given permission by the Pitjantjatjara Elders to teach and interpret, and has taught at UNISA in the summer school for over 30 years. She is currently an Adjunct at the Unaipon School, University of South Australia.

Ngitji Ngitji is an advocate on Indigenous issues, where she provides Anangu perspectives and cultural information to government departments and organizations highlighting Indigenous cultural protocols, issues and consultation processes. Ngitji Ngitji considers Indigenous languages as significant to cultural transmission and knowledge and the importance of language maintenance.

Most recently Ngitji Ngitji assisted in the organization of returning Aboriginal children who were removed from their family from Oodnadatta, South Australia facilitated through SA link-UP. Ngitji Ngitji is currently writing her life story *Only A Bridge*.

**Theme: Elusive Relationships**  
**Presenter: Penny van Toorn**  
University of Sydney

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A PEOPLE: FRAGMENTARY LIFE WRITINGS IN QUEENSLAND, 1890S-1930S**

My current research considers Aboriginal life-writings in Queensland from the 1890s to the 1930s. These early life-writings exist in the form of letters to the Chief Protectors. I view these letters as fragmentary, dialogic auto/biographical writings in which Aboriginal men, women and children (and white government officials) were performing various kinds of self-hood on paper, for their intended reader.

For all its flaws, the bureaucratic system was a seed-bed of Aboriginal life writing, because it required Aboriginal people to write about themselves and each other. Taken together, these hundreds of mini-narratives amount to an 'autobiography of a people.'

Knotty ethical questions abound in this project. What is the best way to approach the families of these early Aboriginal writers? How should I proceed when the wishes of the families run counter to the requirements imposed by the archival institutions? Worst of all, how do I proceed when the university's ethics policies are designed primarily to minimise the University's legal vulnerability, rather than to protect the interests of the individuals and community with whom I confer, and on whom I rely on when making decisions.

**Biography:**

Penny van Toorn is a Senior Lecturer in Australian Literature and Australian Studies at the University of Sydney. She is the author of *Writing Never Arrives Naked: Early Aboriginal Cultures of Writing in Australia* (Aboriginal Studies Press, 2006). She served as an honorary editorial assistant on Ruby Langford Ginibi's biography of her son, *Haunted By the Past* (1997), and with Anita Heiss coedited *Stories Without End*, a special Indigenous volume of the literary journal, *Southerly* (2002).

## Theme: Who Owns the Story?

Presenter: Terry Whitebeach  
Charles Darwin University

### TELLING SOMEONE ELSE'S STORY

In late 1998 I began to record interviews with Alexander Donald (Pwerle) Ross, senior Kaytetye man, and to create from our conversations and transcripts of Don Ross's interviews with linguists and family members over a sixteen year period, a written account of his life.

Don Ross passed away before that process was completed. Therefore, what had been a joint enterprise, negotiated at each turn with Don Ross as the final arbiter, now became my single responsibility, with the Old Man's authority for the life history vested in his family. Completing the life history was very complex, trying to stay true to what I had understood as the Old Man's intent and desire, filling some of the gaps in the story by eliciting information from other family member's friends and acquaintances and from archival and other historical documents.

The life history went through a number of drafts, as interested parties such as linguists, IAD staff members, Ross family members, historians and other academics gave their input and made their requests. Thus, what the Old Man and I had assumed we would achieve in a year or two, together, became a complicated seven-year journey, over many different highways and byways.

My PhD thesis entitled *Telling Someone Else's Story* grew out of the experience of working on this life history: it addresses many of the cultural, professional, historiographical and literary issues involved in telling someone else's story.

The life history, *A Versatile Man – the Life and Times of Alexander Donald Pwerle Ross*, is now in the final stages of its editing and publishing. It will be released this year by IAD Press. The current editor and I have edited out much of the material which was added in the seven year redrafting process, so that what remains (hopefully) is the sense and actuality of the man himself, telling his story, in his own way, in conversation with a number of listeners, whose presence is indicated, briefly, in the narrative, and who are the receivers of his stories.

Don Ross's life was made more complex by his own complex identity – a Kaytetye man whose white antecedents had helped establish the Telegraph Line, and had been pioneers of the Northern Territory pastoral industry. This complexity of identity is mirrored in the complexity of the task of creating what is now (at least to a reading audience) the 'definitive' public account of Alexander Donald Ross's life and times.

My paper would concern itself with theme 3: ownership of story, the role and nature of the audience and its effect on the narrative, in deciding what is included and excluded; the ethics of 'interpreting' someone else's story, with framing narratives; the issue of accessibility of the narrative to audiences outside the culture and cultural perspectives of the narrator; the gaps in the narrative, the reason for, and significance of, their existence. The paper also would address some of the issues in theme 5: the chronological narrative and how that may misrepresent a particular cultural perspective, and the issue of multiple voices.

#### **Biography:**

Terry Whitebeach is a writer, oral historian and creative writing teacher. She has a BA from the University of Tasmania, an MA from Edith Cowan University and a PhD from Charles Darwin University. She has published two collections of poetry, two novels for young adults and a biography, as well as essays and reviews. She has also written three documentary radio plays for the ABC. She has an interest in collaborative writing – her second novel, *Bantam*, was written collaboratively with her son, Michael Brown, and she collaborated with Kaytetye senior man, Don Ross, on his life history, *A Versatile Man*. She is presently preparing to work with Anmatyerr elder Rosalie Kunoth Monks on Ms Kunoth Monks biography.

**Theme: Mixed Identities**  
**Presenter: Judi Wickes**  
University of Sunshine Coast

**'NEVER REALLY HEARD OF IT':  
THE CERTIFICATE OF EXEMPTION AND LOST IDENTITY**

Since colonisation, Australia's Aboriginal people have been subjected to ongoing government legislative and controls, in the name of 'care and protection'. In 1897, under the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium, Act* the Queensland Government devised an inaugural policy whereby certain 'half-caste' Aboriginal people could apply for a 'Certificate of Exemption'. The 'Certificate' was available to a small minority who could prove they could manage their own affairs and find suitable employment in the wider community. In order to be eligible for exemption and to be considered no longer 'under the Act, a person had to in effect sever all ties with their Aboriginal kin, culture and traditions. Although some 5,000 Indigenous Queenslanders were exempted between 1897 and 1967, there has been virtually no scholarly research on the impact of past legislation on these people or their descendents. Based on research from my Honours thesis, this paper critically discusses the past and ongoing impact of this system of exemption on those who gained it and on their descendents.

**Biography:**

Judi Wickes is a Wakka Wakka/Kalkadoon woman from Queensland. She is currently a post-graduate student at the University of the Sunshine Coast. After qualifying in Social Work at the University of Queensland in 1997, Judi worked as a Stolen Generation Counsellor. Working with those families in their search for their family/identity, re-ignited questions about her own Aboriginal identity. It resulted in her Honours thesis *'Never heard of it' A study of the impact on identity of the Queensland Certificate of Exemption for Aboriginal People* completed in 2005. Since then Judi has enrolled in a Master of Arts in the School of Social Sciences at the University of the Sunshine Coast to research the lived experience of citizenship amongst Indigenous Queenslanders granted the Certificate of Exemption.

**Theme: Art and Politics**  
**Presenter: Melissa Williams**  
University of Auckland

**WRITING MAORI MIGRATION STORIES: SOME OF THE CHALLENGES FROM WITHIN**

New Zealand historians often refer to the mass migration of Maori to the nation's cityscapes between 1945 and 1970 as one of the world's most dramatic demographic shifts. During this period it is suggested that the indigenous Maori population transformed from being a predominantly rural and tribal population to a predominantly urban and detribalised socio-economic sector of the national demographic. Aside from a limited number of biographical accounts, the story of post-war Maori migration has been collectivised into a progressive national history belonging to all New Zealanders.

My current research draws on the oral narratives of members of my extended family who migrated from the far north of New Zealand to Auckland between 1945 and 1970. While my relationship to those who moved to Auckland places me in a privileged position in terms of my access to their oral narratives and, some would argue, an insider cultural understanding, my relationship with the migrants also presents a range of challenges in terms of reconciling the expectations of academia and of my whanaunga (extended family or blood relations). Issues which have come to the fore and which I will discuss include: how competing purposes and claims to ownership of this history of migration will influence how I use the information my research reveals. The process of interviewing family can both strengthen and weaken inter-generational misunderstandings, biases and allegiances. Writing an indigenous history from within and stripping the migratory experience back to the individual life-story disrupts the existing nationalistic and homogenous Maori migration narrative; the dynamism of Maori migration has the potential to both congeal and splinter the historical and contemporary relationships between tribe, community, whanau (family group), and individual inheritors of that history.

**Biography:**

Melissa Williams is a PhD candidate in the Department of History at the University of Auckland. Her PhD thesis, 'Constructions of Urban Maori Community: Migrations from North Hokianga to Auckland, 1945-1970', draws on the oral narratives of the Te Rarawa people who joined with many other Maori in the post-war 'mass' migration to New Zealand's cities. Melissa's research engages with the contentious issues of detribalisation and cultural dislocation via the narratives of migrants. Her informants' recollections of living, working, playing and praying in the city of Auckland challenge prevailing stereotypes of urban Maori as dysfunctional and detribalised. Melissa's research interests also include mid-twentieth century representations of Maori identity, the development of post-war Maori policy and historical methodologies as they relate to the historical representation of Maori.