

HDR POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH RETREAT 2013

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

I really enjoyed each day of the retreat and everyone's participation. In the Engaging Our Mob workshop, I found the workshop to provide a number of learning opportunities and experiences. It was very informative and provided valuable insight in having experienced academics, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, share their experiences – both good and bad – in engaging in Aboriginal research. Beyond this, I found it particularly valuable that other experienced academics, from different cultural backgrounds, engaged and participated on this day. It reinforced that we are always learning.

To my surprise and great delight, I very much enjoyed the student presentations. It was truly interesting learning about the research other students are engaged in and their experiences, both personally and professionally, in conducting their research. With so many disciplines presented and reflected on the day, it made for dynamic diversity in the presentations – as well as students being at different stages within their research. This day really helped me connect with the PhD process amid a group of my peers.

The final day offered practical tools about the layout of our thesis and the lit review. This was a very encouraging experience and the facilitator offered valuable advice while facilitating dialogue where we were able to learn from each other's experience.

By the last day, I was referring to the retreat as 'PhD Camp' because that's what it felt like – it was fun, engaging, informative, practical and motivating.

It was such an honour to listen to such highly regarded Aboriginal academics. I felt lucky to be a part of this.

Lise Lafferty, PhD candidate, the Kirby Institute, UNSW Medicine, The University of New South Wales

I specifically like the humour of each speaker mixed with passion and real life experiences of research and personal. I learnt a lot. I left feeling inspired, emotional and humble to be a part of a multi-talented group of scholars. As alluded to on the last day just before we departed, I benefited more from the bonding relationship with my supervisor, Asmi, and my fellow colleagues. Gary Foley and Tom Calma were the quintessential of Aboriginal Australian lived experiences - priceless and incomparable.

Veronica Fynn, PhD candidate, National Centre for Indigenous Studies, The Australian National University

As an 'off-campus' candidate, the HDR retreat was (& is) a great opportunity for me to meet colleagues and see just what their research is about. Each new project I hear about is something interesting and worthwhile. It is good to catch up on their individual progress.

The 'Engaging Our Mob' workshop was well done, and a chance to hear what and how our NCIS staff work and think.

I learnt about Australian Aboriginal struggles for voice & recognition in my undergraduate years, so to hear Gary Foley speak in person was quite something - such sustained passion. Tom Calma's talk was also interesting and enlightening.

I value the opportunity to present aspects of my research at the retreats, doing so allows me to revise & reflect on my research in a holistic and concise way. All the presentations I heard were interesting and absorbing.

Gary Toone, PhD candidate, National Centre for Indigenous Studies, The Australian National University

As a relatively new student at NCIS I really enjoyed getting to know all the other HDR students and NCIS staff and finding out more about everyone's research and projects in a collegial atmosphere. I thought the Engaging Our Mob workshop worked really well in this format and was very dynamic with more formal "interviews" and then questions and feedback from the audience.

Meeting Gary Foley was certainly a highlight and a wonderful privilege - this man is a living legend (some of my friends were really envious)! Tom Calma's presentation was also very informative, particularly in terms of the current push for constitutional change and the Recognise campaign which have been hot topics of conversation in the communities I work with, and for me personally, Tom's presentation really clarified a lot of the issues at stake.

I found [candidates' presentations] to be an interesting and useful challenge which really highlighted the salient points of my research again - what is the main question, how do the different parts relate to it, etc... Something we have to refer back to all the time.

I have come away from both the HDR retreat and the writing retreat feeling absolutely privileged to have been accepted as an HDR student at NCIS this year! The support I have received from everyone in the centre is unparalleled in my experience as a post-grad student. I also took heart from the more informal discussions revolving around the exemplary ethics, integrity, and research principles of the centre and its people (staff and students), and feel incredibly lucky to be doing my PhD here with all of you.

Magali McDuffie, PhD candidate, National Centre for Indigenous Studies, The Australian National University

For me, it was good for us all to have the opportunity to meet together, to exchange ideas and discuss our different issues - also to hear what's happening in other Indigenous Studies colleges. This week contributed to us feeling stronger about our work.

[It was] inspiring ... to see Dr Foley. We heard from his talk how difficult it is for some people, like him, to make it in the academy – he achieved it through sheer determination and courage – so it was rare and special to hear him speak – thank you for organising that. His website www.kooriweb.org is indeed a valuable resource. When I spoke with him, he recommended we all read (or re-read) *Animal Farm* by George Orwell (1945)...

As students at the National Centre for Indigenous Studies, we are learning how to think critically and push the boundaries to develop new knowledge in the relatively new area of Indigenous Studies, not re-produce what might be expressed in more traditional colleges. Sharing and discussing ideas in a supportive environment is a valuable part of the postgraduate experience – developing an academic, intellectual cohort of sorts.

... the casual collective discussions with Prof. Dodson over the week were insightful and enriching... In these structured environments, students learn quickly and are given confidence to challenge, discuss and formulate new ideas and arguments. Because we are coming into this relatively new discipline of Indigenous Studies and are learning how to bring together information to form new knowledge and offer alternat[ive] ideas to mainstream thought, Prof. Dodson (and other senior Indigenous studies mentors) is a precious resource for us. We can learn from his national and international experience.

Katherine Aigner, PhD candidate, National Centre for Indigenous Studies, The Australian National University

I feel very grateful to be able to be in a space with others where we can share our experiences. There is such a diversity of scholarship, but such terrific interest and support. It's a unique opportunity to be connected to all the work being done here around issues that concern Indigenous people.

Mary Spiers Williams, PhD Candidate, ANU College of Law, The Australian National University

I thought that the event was well organised and exceptionally useful. I left feeling that my understanding of both the challenges and opportunities of researching indigenous communities was much enhanced by the experience. I also appreciated the networking opportunities provided.

I shall certainly be along next year.

Dr Gavin J.D. Smith, Senior Lecturer in Sociology, School Of Sociology, ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences

I appreciated the chance to take part in the retreat- it was my first presentation of my research plan to a larger audience than staff meetings in CAEPR, and the feedback was

very useful, also the opportunity to hear other research and we realise that we all seem to experience very similar highs and lows. Just learning about other people's work was fascinating. A highlight for me was Gary Foley and Tom Calma- Foley gave such an entertaining but poignant mix of memoir and history lesson, and Tom Calma was inspirational in his after dinner speech. I valued the warm, collaborative atmosphere and would love to come again if invited.

Helen Fraser, PhD candidate, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences

I think two aspects of the retreat are very impressive.

Firstly, the organization of the retreat is very nice. In China, I think nearly all the meetings are very serious, while there was an easy-going and friendly air about the retreat here, though the content of the retreat is very academic. All the participants can ask questions and give their own suggestions freely in the retreat, which helps me get new ideas.

Secondly, the statements made in the retreat helped me understand the indigenous protection of Australia more. I found the struggle of your aboriginals in the history, the improvement of today's protective measures and the efforts made by your scholars.

Thank you for the retreat.

Yan Li, Visiting Fellow, NCIS/ANU College Of Law

My experience <...> was overall very positive <....>

The interviews on the first day I thought provided a rare opportunity to hear people involved in the field speak so candidly and openly about their experiences, and the facilitator encouraged this sharing well. For me, this was a very special element of the retreat and stands out from other seminars and workshops I have attended. The atmosphere allowed for thoughtful reflection and open discussion.

Gary Foley's presentation was very engaging and inspiring - this was great contribution to the retreat.

Katherine Bellchambers, Honours student in Anthropology, ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences
