I was fortunate to have the honour to be invited to the 5th International Yi Research Conference at the South West University for Nationalities in Chengdu city in Sichuan Province, China thanks to the generosity of the Yi Research Centre at the University and the kind invitation of Professor Akuwuwu, the Director of the Centre. The Conference was held over the weekend of 26-27 October and I made 3 separate presentations over the 2 days.

My presentations were an ‘Introduction to Indigenous Australia’ and ‘The Yawuru Native Title Settlement and the Yawuru Future’. I also presented an abridged version of the latter presentation. I am grateful for the great assistance I received from NCIS HDR Candidate, Ms Glynnis-Anne Buckley & Mr Lama Zitzot (a Comparative Literature Masters student at the South West University for Nationalities) for translating my PPT slides and parts of my presentation into Mandarin Chinese and additionally Lama’s assistance with the Yi language.

After the Conference, in the week of 27 October, I was privileged to travel with Prof Akuwuwu to the Yi Autonomous Regions and experience Yi culture and peoples first hand. We were also accompanied by Glynnis-Anne & Lama which again was invaluable given my total lack of understanding of the languages. Perhaps the highlight of the trip was visiting the Yi Primary School in the County of Liangshan (‘the Cool Mountains’). I was inspired by the school, pupils, teachers and staff. What particularly impressed me was their determination to retain and transmit Yi values, culture and world view but at the same equipping the children for a life in broader China and the rest of the world.

I had the pleasure of visiting the studios of world famous Yi artist, Ajizamo and viewing a collection of his most notable works and have him explain the meaning of each to me.

I also visited a Yi village in the County of Liangshan where I was witness to an ancient Yi ceremony of spiritual cleansing performed by a Yi Sunyi (traditional Shaman) which for me was an extremely powerful experience.

It is hoped in the coming years that NCIS can establish a more formal arrangement with the Yi Centre at the South West Nationalities University to further scholarship and research between the Centres and the two universities.

Mick Dodson
NCIS WELCOMES NEW STAFF

New research staff for Serving Our Country Project

A warm welcome to the Centre’s two new research staff members, who will work on the ARC Linkage 4-year project ‘Serving Our Country: a history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the defence of Australia’: Ms Kate Macfarlane will undertake overall project coordination and Mr Craig Greene will coordinate community consultation for the project.

NEWS FROM NCIS STAFF

Indigenous Health Interest Group Research Showcase

On the 2nd of October Dr Bill Fogarty gave a keynote summation at the Indigenous Health Interest Group showcase. This event showcased the work of staff and students of The ANU’s College of Medicine, Biology and Environment (COMBE), researchers from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), and invited experts. The day also featured keynote presentations by Dr Tom Calma AO, a presentation by Ms Julie Tongs OAM from Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service, and a welcome to country by Ngunnawal elder Aunty Agnes Shea. This Showcase was organised by the Indigenous Health Interest Group (IHIG), and was co-sponsored by COMBE and AIATSIS. It was a great success with a range of papers dealing with issues from across the Indigenous health spectrum.

Bill Fogarty

Learning On Country

Dr Fogarty, Professor Dodson and Dr Schwab from CAEPR at The ANU recently gave a presentation to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet on the Learning on Country Program in the Northern Territory. Dr Fogarty is leading a partnership between the NCIS and CAEPR that is working with a number of pilot programs in Western and Eastern Arnhem Land which connect Indigenous Land and Sea Management, remote communities and Education. Dr Fogarty and Dr Schwab also recently gave a presentation on the Learning on Country pilots in Nhulunbuy in the Northern Territory. You can find out more about Learning on Country on our web site:

> ncis.anu.edu.au/research/pol_dev_eng.php#locp

Bill Fogarty

Learning On Country Students at Galiwinku

Assessing the public’s views of incarceration & non-incarceration alternatives using Citizens’ Juries

In recent years there has been increasing interest in involving communities in decision making through various forms of ‘deliberative democracy’, of which Citizens’ Juries are one such approach. Citizens Juries involve bringing together a randomly selected group of citizens, providing them with good information on the issue at hand, and asking them as members of the citizenry about their preferences for policy options or resource allocation.

Photo courtesy of Shepherdson College
In late 2012, researchers from NCIS (Jill Guthrie and Corinne Walsh), the University of NSW (Tony Butler, Paul Simpson and Michael Doyle) and Curtin University (Jocelyn Jones) were awarded a grant from the Lowitja Institute to examine the public’s views on alternatives to incarceration using Citizens’ Juries.

Our research team is seeking to gain the views of the Australian community about strategies to deal with offenders. A Citizens’ Jury was held in Canberra (28 September 2013) and in Perth (5 October 2013). 300 people from Canberra and 300 people from Perth were randomly selected from the phone directory and sent a letter inviting them to participate in a Citizens’ Jury in their respective city. Fifteen people, and two reserves were selected, who reflected a good mix of people, by gender, age, ethnic/cultural background, socio-economic status.

The findings from the Citizens’ Juries are currently being analysed. A report and recommendations emanating from both Citizens’ Juries will be provided to policymakers to explore with them whether their policy making decisions might be influenced by the knowledge of what an informed citizenry believes should occur in relation to incarceration policies.

A preliminary review of the findings indicates that jurors believe that excessive investment in prisons is becoming an unnecessary burden on the public purse; they were supportive of alternatives to incarceration, including investment in holistic, early intervention and prevention strategies.

Our research is critical because of the continuing high representation of Indigenous people, mostly juveniles, in the Australian prison population.

Corinne Walsh

Article in Griffith Journal of Law and Human Dignity: ‘Does investment in prison building perpetuate investment in social exclusion?’

Linking the theories of Justice Reinvestment and Social Inclusion to examine Australia’s propensity to incarcerate’.

NCIS Researchers, Dr Jill Guthrie and A/ Prof Cressida Fforde, with colleague Professor Michael Levy from the ANU Medical School, recently wrote an article for the Griffith Journal of Law and Human Dignity. The article explores the relationship between the theories of Justice Reinvestment and Social Inclusion. It examines how their combination and adoption in Australia could result in gains for the general population and specifically those in contact with the criminal justice system. The article makes the point that much of the conceptual space occupied by Justice Reinvestment theory has clear links to the theoretical framework of Social Inclusion – that the notion of Social Inclusion builds on understandings of the social determinants of health. Making these links, the article introduces and explores the notion of the social determinants of incarceration. The article argues that there are social and economic imperatives to be realised through the adoption of Justice Reinvestment ideals. Indigenous Australians comprise 26% of the prison population from a 2% population base: for this reason alone the benefits of understanding how the theories of Justice Reinvestment and Social Inclusion might coalesce are important to consider, concluding that doing so may lead to insightful questions such as: Is investment in new prisons really investment in social exclusion?

> apo.org.au/research/investment-prisons-investment-social-exclusion

Jill Guthrie

Engaging Our Mob

An ‘Engaging Our Mob’ training workshop was held during the NCIS Research Retreat on 19 September 2013. The workshop was developed and run by Cheryl Gilroy, Director, People Dynamics Australia.

The workshop aimed to enhance participants’ understanding of the ethics and contexts of communicating and collaborating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Staff and students learnt skills and strategies for working successfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities in a research context.

Workshop participants included representatives from NCIS, the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) a range of ANU departments, the University of Newcastle and NSW Ministry of Health Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health; University of Newcastle Department of Rural Health; and staff from AIATSIS.

During the workshop NCIS Director Professor Mick Dodson, Assistant Professor Kerrie Doyle (University of Canberra and NCIS HDR Candidate) and Dr Bill Fogarty...
(NCIS, ANU) shared their cultural and academic knowledge and experiences around engaging respectfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities.

Some of the key learnings from the workshop and panel discussion are listed below:

- The need for respect. This includes respecting Indigenous views and acting in a respectful manner when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Know about Aboriginal history and culture.
- Participate in cultural events.
- Allow sufficient time to build relationships & trust.
- Allow plenty of ‘lead-in’ time prior to embarking on research or programs.
- All people working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have an obligation to know the Indigenous perspective.
- Engage with key people in the community.
- Seek cultural guidance.
- Be sensitive about Country.
- Be genuine, honest and accountable.
- Use influence, not power when engaging with communities.
- The need for reciprocity: Giving back to the community.
- Ensure sound feedback processes and a ‘both-ways’ knowledge flow.
- Encourage and support community ownership of projects.
- Aim to be flexible: Be open to different approaches.
- Use open and frank communication. A golden rule is “If you don’t know, always ask”.
- Don’t be afraid to make mistakes.

Workshop participants valued the knowledge sharing around effective and respectful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The workshop and panel discussion also provided an important platform for new and existing researchers to learn more about working effectively and respectfully with Indigenous communities.

Leonard Kanowski
NCIS STUDENT UPDATE

Writing Retreat

After the NCIS Research Retreat, staff and students took off for the week long writing retreat at the ANU coastal campus at Kiola. Driving in tandem we reached our destination at lunchtime, and were soon blown away with the high quality of the environmentally friendly houses, though a little jealous of the heritage houses the staff got to stay in. Though the staff were soon forgiven once we saw the sheer amount of food they brought with them, we consequently enjoyed bacon and eggs for breakfast, fresh salads and sandwiches for lunch, and catered dinners at the end of the day. Thank goodness Cressida had the foresight to have dinner catered as some of us seriously lack the cooking gene (apparently I am capable of burning coffee). Pure bliss at the end of a hard day’s work. Each of the student’s rooms held two single beds, two desks, and an OH&S instruction for how to make your bed. We soon settled into our writing schedules, each having our own ‘special spot’ on campus where we would write from breakfast until midday when we’d stop for lunch and a swim, and then write again until dinner time. Our nights were spent sitting around the fire having a good gossip about our day, our writing and our lives. Though on our last night we moved inside and enjoyed the roaring fireplace and hospitality of Magali’s cottage. It was a wonderful opportunity to get to know each other outside the context of the university, particularly for our external students. There was such a sense of collaboration with students and staff helping each other though discussing our work, sharing resources, and generally supporting each other through the difficult writing process. We were soon joined by the divine Eliza, who was able to make any feelings of stress instantly disappear with her gorgeous baby smile. I think I’ll try and borrow her during my final write-up! Huge thanks go to the NCIS staff who made the retreat possible, and for those who attended for making a memory I’ll treasure forever.

Feedback for the retreat included:

“...it was very nice to get to know everyone in such an relaxed environment, away from the everyday work pressures. And also as Veronica mentioned, the staff there is absolutely fantastic: on the first day we were taken on a two-hour tour of the whole property by Richard, the manager, who really made us feel welcome”

“[I] feel incredibly lucky to be doing my PhD here with all of you”

“This week contributed to us feeling stronger about our work”

Coincidentally, Brush Island (which can be seen from the Kiola Beach) was where Captain Cook journaled his first description of Aboriginal peoples on 23 April 1770.

Alycia Nevalainen
PhD Candidate Veronica Fynn writes about her experience coming to the National Centre for Indigenous Studies

I started my PhD in February 2013 with the National Centre for Indigenous Studies. As a newly enrolled student, I was challenged by an unfamiliar research and teaching style offered by ANU. First semester was spent doing several short courses that I find helpful but somewhat fragmented. Then came second semester. Whilst doing my annual plan, with reference to the NCIS Student Guide, I noticed under recommended course for first year “Demo 8082: Social Research Practice”. This would be one of two courses I registered for as a PhD student in Year 1. Time and space will not allow for a full evaluation of this course, however a few things are worth mentioning: 1) this course is comprehensive, holistic and fundamental in that it not only teaches theory and concepts but practices all the necessary ingredients needed to complete a PhD thesis and beyond - i.e., from the proposal stage, through to ethics application and the final protocol; 2) the course provides real life practical lessons and challenges associated with doing academic research projects; and 3) the Professor (Bruce Smyth) and Tutor (Shelby Higgs) are the best you can ever have for tutelage. Personally, both of them have provided invaluable assistance outside of regular class hours in helping me strengthen my proposal, online survey, and semi-structure interview. In general, both of them have provided invaluable assistance outside of regular class hours in helping me strengthen my proposal, online survey, and semi-structure interview. In general, they are (still continuing to after the course has ended) always available to help me think through the logics and rationale of my research project. Noteworthy, there is an exam at the end of course. Yes, you read it right. BUT there is a fun aspect of doing it: a celebratory drinks after the class test at Fellows Bar. Guess who was first out of the test? Well, your guess is as good as mine.

Veronica Fynn, PhD Candidate, NCIS

Congratulations to Fleur Adcock and Samuel Curpatrick for submitting their thesis!

Samuel Curkpatrick and Fleur Adcock commenced their PhD research at the NCIS approximately at the same time. They have now become the first and second candidates from the NCIS to submit their dissertations for examination. We collectively wish them well and are confident of a positive outcome. The titles and a very short synopsis of their research follow.

**MR SAMUEL CURKPATRICK**

Thesis Title: Conversing tradition: Wägilak manikay ‘song’ and the Australian Art Orchestra’s Crossing Roper Bar

Synopsis: Sam’s thesis is an exploration of tradition as event in the present, realised through the dynamic expressions of manikay (song) in contemporary contexts. His research gives particular emphasis to the collaboration between Wägilak songmen from Ngukurr in Australia’s Northern Territory and the Australian Art Orchestra, known as Crossing Roper Bar.

**MS FLEUR ADCOCK**


Fleur’s thesis analyses the special procedures’ role regarding indigenous peoples, identifying the mechanism’s broad mandate to advance the realisation of International Indigenous rights norms particularly from the vantage of examining the regulatory mechanisms used by the special procedures to fulfil that mandate.

Asmi Wood, Barbara Wallner, Fleur Adcock, Cressida Fforde, Bill Fogarty
PAST EVENTS

The 2013 Annual ANU Reconciliation Lecture

Patrick Dodson (Photo taken by David Paterson from SCAPA)

Professor Patrick Dodson is a Yawuru man from Broome in Western Australia. Professor Dodson lives in Broome with his family, where he is involved in social, cultural, economic and environmental sustainability through his roles as Chair of the Lingiari Foundation and Executive Chair of Nyamba Buru Yawuru. He is Adjunct Professor at the University of Notre Dame Australia in Broome where he lectures in spirituality and the challenge of reconciliation. His brother, Professor Mick Dodson AM, is also a national Indigenous Australian leader and is Director of the National Centre for Indigenous Studies at ANU.

In this lecture, Professor Patrick Dodson reflected on the politics and challenges of Australia’s reconciliation journey.

Highlights from the talk:

Our challenges was to ensure the recognition of Indigenous rights, while also encouraging a commitment to overcoming chronic disadvantage through improving health, education and economic conditions for Indigenous people. This was to be done in collaboration with the then peak Indigenous representative body, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC).

The Council was established in part as a means to find agreement on the merits of a document or documents of reconciliation – an objective that grew out of an inability to resolve the issue of Treaty.

Many great Australians were involved with the work of the Council, they are too many to name. But I do want to acknowledge and pay respect to the work of Dr Evelyn Scott as Chair during the latter term of the Council. Evelyn took on the role at a time when the political winds were blowing against hope of any meaningful reconciliation.

Over the ten years of the Council, council members worked hard to create partnerships and lay a foundation for change. We worked with the mining and pastoral industries, the media and local governments, as well as with schools and community groups. Local reconciliation action groups and study circles were established, and numerous meetings across the country were held.

…

Closing the Gap targets have since been identified to focus effort on improving outcomes in certain areas. Progress has been slow, but there have been some improvements, particularly in the area of Indigenous health. It is important to acknowledge the gains that have been made to date because it is these successes we should learn from and build upon.

…

If governments are seriously interested in dealing with the crisis that allegedly exists in Aboriginal communities, then surely the better method should be to support and partner with Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory to find meaningful, long term solutions to the problems they face.

…

The new architects of Indigenous policy must provide the space for Indigenous people to set their own agenda for development. Lest we forget, economic independence has always been a central component of the Indigenous struggle for land rights and decolonisation. This is why the capacity for Indigenous people to negotiate with governments and resource developers over the use of their lands has been so critical to self-determination.

…

Reconciliation cannot be taken for granted. It is not a feel-good word that can be bandied around lightly, or be co-opted to obscure the need for restorative justice.

Too frequently the word reconciliation is used to gloss over the sense of alienation, marginalisation and anger that many Aboriginal people still feel about the unjust way that Australia was settled.

…

The past is not going to be forgotten or forgiven. Its reconciliation will come when governments stop trying to make us the same as everyone else. When they desist
from constantly demanding we conform to every facet of mainstream society that wants to break down or deny who we are, especially with regards to our unique relationship to our land and community.

…

We might then perhaps be closer to arriving at our destination of being a reconciled nation.

Please visit our website for the transcript, the video and the podcast.

Presentation of the Reconciliation Awards

In 2012 ANU instigated the inaugural Vice Chancellor’s Award for Reconciliation for Students. This competition was open to students of ANU, with a $4,000.00 prize each for the best undergraduate and the best postgraduate entry. The creative entries were required to reflect an aspect of Reconciliation arising from the ANU RAP.

The winning entries were chosen for their demonstrated thoughtful commitment to the process of Reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

The winning entries for 2013 were:

Undergraduate award winner: Amanda Steele for her artwork. Looking through a Leadership Lens: The Reconciliation Horizon

Graduate Award winner: Edward Benjamin Jeyaknth Niles for his artwork, which emphasises that learning/education represents an essential part of the process of reconciliation.

ON BEHALF OF THE NCIS TEAM WE WISH YOU A HAPPY NEW YEAR!