



Inside This Edition



Tracking our Alumni



Work experience at Channel 7



Is this the first Aboriginal Fencer?



Introducing Dr Francesca Robertson



Kurongkurl Katitjin Out and About

Through the Rock Solid Foundation Travel Scholarship, graduate Amy Hammond was able to travel from Tamworth, NSW to attend the event

Alumni sundowner a small success in bringing people together

2014 marks the third anniversary of the establishment and recognition of Edith Cowan University's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Alumni and the unveiling of the Rock Solid Foundations tribute.

On Friday, 28 November 2014, Kurongkurl Katitjin hosted its annual event, which aims to offer an opportunity for graduates to re-connect, network and socialise. About 40 people gathered for the small event, including 14 graduates, of which five were attending the celebration for the first time. These graduates were presented with a custom, hand-made Alumni pin and saw first-hand their name in stone on the tribute.

Story continued on page 3

Kurongkurl Katitjin, pronounced 'koo-ong-kurl cut-it-chin', is a Nyoongar phrase meaning 'coming together to learn'.

Welcome from the Head of Centre

Welcome to the Kamarang edition of *Our Place*, the official newsletter of Kurongkurl Katitjin, Centre for Indigenous Australian Education and Research at Edith Cowan University.

This is the last edition of *Our Place* for 2014 after what has been a very big and challenging year. I am sure you would agree that plenty has been achieved throughout the year and we particularly love that we can share that with you through this newsletter.

And so with the year coming to an end, it is always a perfect time to reflect on the year that was and begin thinking about plans for the new year.

As part of the University's quality review process, the recent quinquennial "School Review" of Kurongkurl Katitjin, held on the 25-27 November 2014, was an ideal and timely opportunity to assist in that reflection and begin to formulate our direction into 2015 and beyond.

More on the outcomes of the review will be highlighted in a future edition.

I now take this opportunity to thank our readers and we very much look forward to your continued support as we all look forward to a prosperous 2015.

On behalf of the staff and students of Kurongkurl Katitjin, I wish you, your families and friends a very happy and safe festive season.

Happy reading!

Colleen K.

Professor Colleen Hayward AM
Head of Centre, Kurongkurl Katitjin;
Pro-Vice Chancellor (Equity & Indigenous)



About the Centre

ECU's Kurongkurl Katitjin has a vital role in assisting the University to meet its commitment to Indigenous peoples.



Our mission is to "provide excellence in teaching and learning and research in a culturally inclusive environment that values the diversity of Indigenous Australian history and cultural heritage".

Consistent with this mission, the Centre provides support and academic pathways for Indigenous students and opportunities for non-Indigenous students to enhance their professional knowledge and cultural competence.

Alumni sundowner a small success in bringing people together

Continued from page 1

Graduate Amy Hammond was awarded the first Rock Solid Foundation Travel Scholarship and travelled from Tamworth, NSW to attend the event.

Amy completed an Advanced Diploma in Stage Management (2006) and a Bachelor of Arts (Performing Arts) (2013) through ECU and gave a moving account of her journey since leaving ECU.

Entertainment for the evening was provided by the talented, young and emerging performer Alan Little, who recently completed WAAPA's Aboriginal Theatre course and following an intense audition process, has just been accepted into WAAPA for the next three years.

While still a small event, Kurongkurl Katitjin is pleased with the response from graduates and will continue with this flagship event.

Kurongkurl Katitjin is looking to further develop and enhance the collective network and program of activities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduates of ECU beyond this annual event.

Planning for the development of a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Alumni Strategy is already underway.

ECU currently has the names of 534 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduates on the Rock Solid Foundations tribute, with more names expected to be added for the event in 2015.

Keeping track of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Alumni

Kurongkurl Katitjin coordinates activities specifically for ECU's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Alumni alumni, including the annual Rock Solid Foundations sundowner event in November.

If you, or someone you know graduated from Edith Cowan University or its predecessors*, between the years of 1951 and 2014, we would love to hear from you.

*This includes Claremont Teachers College, Graylands Teachers College, the Western Australian Secondary Teachers College, Nedlands College of Advanced Education, Mount Lawley Teachers College, Churchlands Teachers College or the merged Western Australian College of Advanced Education.

For more information on upcoming events and activities, email us at rocksolid@ecu.edu.au to ensure we have your updated contact details.



L-R: Graduates Leanne Pilkington and Alison Gibson, with daughter Madison and Jessica Carter



Entertainment was provided by WAAPA Aboriginal Theatre student Alan Little

Nyoongar Season: About Kambarang

Aliwa! Aliwa! Or “Look Out! Look Out! The swooping season is here! Kambarang season is the season of birth with many new arrivals being shown off proudly by their parents. Using your eyes and ears, you should see and hear many wetland and woodland bird species. But it’s most often a time of fear, for many people as the Coolbardies or Magpies set about protecting their own by ‘swooping’ anyone or anything that comes too close to their nests.

I like to use this time of the year to show my kids how to observe what is happening and some possible reasons why, so we often sit watch and listen to see what is happening around us.

There is a lot happening at this time of the year, with many of the plants reproducing in haste before the heat starts to really kick in. There are many Balga or Grass Trees in flower at the moment with their green flower stalks or spears growing rapidly at 5-10cm per day and up to 5 meters tall.

Some of these have already started to open their flowers. Starting on the northern side of the flower stalk, these will open white to cream from the base all the way up. With so many little flowers open all at once in the one place, anything that crawl, walk or fly will be attracted to them; making them a wonderful place to observe the local insects in action. And speaking of insects, you’ll also start to notice the Noordoos or Blow Flies, and the ants (in particular the flying ants) quite an iconic way to signify the onset of the summer weather.

October is also the number season to see snakes that have been in hibernation throughout the last couple of seasons. Lizards too will start to make their way out of their sleeping places and already I’ve seen a few squashed on the roads. Please do take care when you’re out and about and give them a chance to cross the roads or paths safely.

When out walking along the coastal pathways or bush tracks take care and beware of where you put your feet; for the most part though, people generally make too much noise when walking so the animals know to get out of the way well before you pass by.

As this season has had a warmer start than usual, we’re already starting to see the new flowers of the Candle Stick Banksias (*Banksia attenuata*) which we would usually expect into November; as the season comes to its transition period into that of the next. Birak season we will see another of the signature flowering plants of Nyoongar Country, the Mooja or the Australian Christmas Tree (*Nuytsia floribunda*) with its masses of yellow/orange flowers that will signal the traditional time to be on the coast ahead of the hot weather that is coming.

This is a fantastic season with all that it offers for those who are able to observe the many things undergoing huge changes. With the warm change in the weather, you will start to notice the light winds, an explosion of insect numbers, flowering, animals raising young and protecting them or foraging for food after sleeping through the winter.



Jason Barrow

Kurungkurl Katitjin Cultural Awareness Officer

j.barrow@ecu.edu.au

Wongi Nyoongar – Talking Nyoongar

In this edition of Wongi Nyoongar, we continue the theme of looking at various places and points of interest along the Derbal Yerrigan (Swan River) and take a closer look at Djarlgarra, also known as the Canning River.

Nyoongar phrase	Pronunciation	English translation
Djarlgarra	jarl-garra	Canning River
Yalya	yell-ya	Sand
Nyoola	nyoo-la	Seaweed
Yelar	yee-lar	Fungi
Kwoonert	quoon-urt	Seeds
Kaat Moodjar	cart mood-jar	Red head
Biratj	bir-atch	Light of day
Mangka	mang-car	Leaf

Nyoongar Story Time

Gabbi Kowangalup– Place where water comes out of the hole

This is where the Derbarl Yerrigan (Swan River) and the Djarlgarra (Canning River) meet. There is a men's dance ground on one side and a woman's dance ground on the other.

There is a hole in the area where fresh water bubbles up out of the ground. This water was used to make a sweet drink called Mungitah.

Mungitch is made by soaking the flower spikes from the banksia grandis in water. The nectar is allowed to dry and then it is rolled into balls and traded with neighbouring groups.

A large campsite is close by.



Dr Noel Nannup

ECU Cultural Ambassador and Kurongkurl Katitjin Elder-in-Residence

n.nannup@ecu.edu.au

Broadcasting student experiences work at Channel 7

as written by student Ashley Penfold

Like most other university students I work part time; I'm a bar attendant at the Crown Casino and during my shifts I've met all sorts of people from all over Australia, even celebrities from around the world. During one evening shift last semester, I happened to meet Monika Kos from Channel 7's Today Tonight. I approached her and introduced myself straight away (I think she was a little impressed by that).

As the conversation went on, I told her that I was studying Broadcasting at Edith Cowan University, and that I was planning to audition for WAAPA after my undergraduate degree but was also interested in doing some work experience. Without any hesitation she handed me her business card and said to email her the following week, and that she would see about organising for me to come in to the studio for a week's work experience.



Ashley with Seven News presenters
Angela Tsun and Basil Zempilas

I was literally on 'cloud nine' for over a week, then finally got my things together and followed up on it, and... it happened! It was such an amazing experience being at Channel 7 as I got to witness how it all works behind the scenes - from behind the cameras to how the editing process works, and I even met the entire Channel 7 cast.

The main highlight for me was sitting next to the Channel 7 News Director and watching the whole process of how the 'breaking news' calls come in, then the journalists and cameras are sent to the scene, the journalists cover the story, the footage is recorded and edited and made ready for the news at 6pm, all in the space of half a day.

I was there long hours every day, so I was really tired by the end of the week, but I left there still smiling.

Dreaming of success

WAAPA graduate Phillip Walley-Stack may be busy on the international stage, but he recently found time to return to ECU to inspire young WA school students. He spoke to more than 100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Years 9 to 12 at the recent 'Dreaming@ECU' event held in November, about his own experiences at university and his career since.

Mr Walley-Stack said he has many fond memories of studying Aboriginal Theatre at WAAPA and that his studies opened up doors for him.

"After graduating from WAAAPA I studied at the NAISDA College in Sydney," he said.

"My WAAPA training helped me to get my first professional acting job at Barking Gecko's Crabbing at High Tide."

The ongoing support he received from his lecturers long after he graduated is another reason Mr Walley-Stack said he would recommend studying at ECU.

Mr Walley-Stack's latest production, Strong, fuses traditional Aboriginal and contemporary arts with song, dance and theatre.

For more information about studying Aboriginal Theatre, visit: www.waapa.ecu.edu.au.

ECU student on way to become first Aboriginal fencing champion

as written by student Tillara Casey

Most young Aboriginal boys dream of being the next AFL superstar like David Wirrapanda or Peter Matera. For Dylan Devenish this wasn't the case. Playing football and engaging in little athletics seemed boring to Devenish, whose sporting pathway took a dramatic turn when he caught a glimpse of fencing on the movie *Richie Rich*.

Devenish remembers the first lesson he ever attended at ECU Cavalier School of Fencing, being a scared child surrounded only by adults. After that first class he realised it was nothing like what he had seen in 'Richie rich' but still enjoyed the class enough to want to return. Devenish knew that fencing was not a popular sport and that it was very difficult.

"I just thought it was sword fighting and going around stabbing people. It was a little more complicated than that" Devenish said.

He started to become very passionate about the sport at a young age. Now at 22, Devenish has travelled around the world competing in some of the most prestigious fencing competitions.

At age seven after watching the infamous 'Richie Rich' Devenish would never have imagined being picked for the 2014 Commonwealth Fencing Championships Foil Fencing team to compete in Scotland in November 2014

Devenish competes in men's foil. Foil uses a thin, flexible blade/sword and requires a strong defence and a killing attack on the torso. Fencing began in 1474 in Spain. Over the centuries, the rules and regulations have changes as the sport spread around the world.

Unfortunately for Devenish, fencing is not a prized sport in Australia that makes it a tough competition to be selected in. Due to fencing not receiving priority sponsorship in Australia, and in particular Western Australia, places are very limited.

Not only does Devenish have to cope with the high intensity training five days a week, he has to balance his other commitments including work and study. A gruelling choice to study Aviation, his second passion, demands a lot of attention.

A three-year degree has turned into a four-year degree for Devenish to enable him to meet the demands of training and travelling to competitions. He should graduate from Edith Cowan University in 2016.

When he graduates he hopes to move to Sydney to attend the University of Sydney to specialise in aerospace engineering. Once Devenish has his completed this he hopes to move to California to pursue a career in space aviation.

"It's the best place for fencing and aviation Engineering," he said. "Trips to Europe are expensive."

Devenish hopes he will continue to fence until he is old and grey because he loves the sport. He hopes to one day be the first Aboriginal to represent Australia for fencing in the Olympic Games.



Entertainment was provided by WAAPA Aboriginal Theatre student Alan Little

Research Update: Synergies of Meaning

The Synergies of Meaning Project explores the resonances between traditional Nyoongar wisdom and modern natural or social science. The first output is a film that explores Boodja (Nyoongar land) and the capacity of its flora, fauna and human populations to adapt to climate change.

With support through a grant from Lottery West, the project is about to move into the post-production phase with a launch planned in early June 2015.

The research underpinning this film needed a framework for the coherent expression of two versions of the boodja journey through time. The framework is a timeline with content naturally falling into eight ancient eras, from 300 million to 7000 years ago, and three modern eras from 7000 years ago to today.

The content of the timeline is generated by simultaneous interrogation of traditional Nyoongar stories and Western scientific knowledge about the land. The Nyoongar version was drawn from Nyoongar boodja creation and other stories in which a linear concept of time is present.

For example, unlike traditional European stories that open with 'once upon a time' most traditional Nyoongar stories open with a line that locates the story in a particular time such as the Nyitting, or the Flood, or before there were clans. This, with additional in-story indicators such as descriptions of real geophysical events and climate, helps to place Nyoongar stories on a timeline.

The Western version is generated by a synthesis and distillation of climate history, geology and archaeology. The material from each discourse was sifted, summarised and aligned and a plain English story emerged.

When the Nyoongar and Western science versions two stories are placed alongside each other the synergies between them are astounding. For example in the third era, Kala Koorliny (The coming of the colours), Spirit Woman seeks to bring a rainbow to earth but she is exiled beyond the dark cloud. She weeps, each tear falls to the earth carrying a reflection of the rainbow, and thus colour is brought to the land.

This has a parallel in the scientific story, 130-260 million years ago the establishment of warmer climate brought rain clouds, sunsets and rainbows. Flowers evolved and the early mammals evolved the capacity to see colour.

Funding is now being sought for the second phase of research, which will explore traditional Nyoongar and modern Western approaches to marriage, child raising and other family matters.

Kurongurl Katitjin researcher awarded her PhD



Kurongurl Katitjin's Senior Research Officer Dr Francesca Robertson was recently awarded her PhD (Doctor of Social Work) from the University of Western Australia.

Dr Robertson's PhD thesis was titled 'an exploration of the effect of a tobacco related harm reduction strategy on parents in the hard-to-reach population', which contributed to understanding how people who are disadvantaged and smoke can be reached and supported to reduce the harm from their smoking.

Kurongurl Katitjin is very proud of Francesca and congratulates her on this wonderful achievement.

Staff Snapshot

Nigel Andrews



Organisational Development Adviser
Centre for Learning and Development

Favourite book:

Green Eggs and Ham by Dr Seuss

Favourite music:

Johnny Cash/Katy Perry/any good music

Favourite food:

Thai / Vietnamese barbecue

Favourite TV Program:

Game of Thrones

Favourite Movie:

Forrest Gump

If you could meet anyone, who would it be?

Bruce Lee

What is something that people don't know about you?

I have over 30 pairs of sneakers

Kurongkurl Katitjin Out and About

Each edition, we showcase some of the meetings, activities and events Kurongkurl Katitjin staff were involved or attended 'out and about' in the community.

Here's what we got up to the past few months:

October 2014	
4/10	TED ^x Perth
7/10	Mental Health Good Outcomes Awards
10/10	Telstra Businesswoman of the Year Awards ceremony
14/10	West Australian Leadership Matters breakfast
15/10	ECU Indigenous Science Workshop at Merriwa SHS
20/10	Swearing-in Ceremony for Governor Kerry Sanderson
25/10	The Third Annual Bert Hawke Dinner
27/10	ECU Indigenous Science Workshop at Port Headland / Bidyadanga
31/10	WA Premier`s Excellence in Aboriginal Education Award Judges Meeting

November 2014	
3/11	AILC Governing Girls event
3/11	Nomad Two World meeting
7/11	ALS 40th Anniversary Dinner
10/11	Australian Commissioners and Child Guardians meeting
10/11	Opening Night of 2014 Ngurra Nyingu Art Exhibition
15/11	WA Australians fo the Year - formal announcement ceremony
19/11	Launch of the Wesfarmers Reconciliation Action Plan 2015 - 2017
20/11	Wesfarmers Gala Dinner
27/11	2014 Pinnacle Awards Ceremony

About this Publication

Our Place is Kurongkurl Katitjin's official newsletter.

Produced six times per year, each edition coincides with one of the six Nyoongar seasons and highlights key activities of the Centre and the University, as well as other significant events and information relating to Indigenous education and research.

It is circulated electronically to a range of stakeholders including staff, students and the broader community. Editions can be found online under the News and Events section at www.kk.ecu.edu.au.

CONTACT DETAILS

Kurongkurl Katitjin,
Centre for Indigenous Australian Education and Research
Edith Cowan University

MAILING ADDRESS

Kurongkurl Katitjin
Edith Cowan University
2 Bradford Street
MT LAWLEY WA 6050

TELEPHONE

134 328

FAX

08 9370 6055

WEBSITE

www.kk.ecu.edu.au

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