



ECU's Jason Barrow and BOM's Marlia Fatnowna point out the new Nyoongar location on the Indigenous Weather Knowledge website

ECU and BOM launch Nyoongar weather calendar

Edith Cowan University (ECU) and the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) have officially launched the Nyoongar Seasonal Calendar, which shares the traditional weather knowledge of the Indigenous people from the Southwest of WA.

Joining Indigenous calendars from across Australia, the newest edition to the BOM website pays tribute to the expansive weather knowledge of the South West Indigenous population, which dates back thousands of years.

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

This edition of *Our Place* sees us farewell another year and welcome in 2013. I hope you all had a wonderful festive season with loved ones and most importantly, had the opportunity to rest and unwind. I certainly welcomed the small break after such a huge, but exciting year.

2012 ended on a high, particularly with the launch of the Nyoongar Seasonal Calendar as part of the Bureau of Meteorology's Indigenous Weather Knowledge website. The Nyoongar calendar is one of nine Aboriginal calendars from around Australia, where groups have highlighted their respective seasonal knowledges for their region.

As with any new year, change is always welcome and we have made some minor visual alterations to our newsletter. A small, but valuable addition to the newsletter this year, will be the contact details of the article contributor. This will allow you to contact our staff directly if you have any particular questions or comments on the article. An example of this can be found on pages four and five.

We will also be looking at introducing a regular update on Indigenous Alumni activity throughout the year, as well as incorporating more community focussed news.

So while we all start to settle into the new year, I wish you all the best for the 2013 and thank you for your continued readership.

Happy reading!



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.

ECU and BOM launch Nyoongar weather calendar

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"Today the Nyoongar people are welcomed as the newest member of the Indigenous Weather Knowledge project, sharing valuable cultural knowledge about our weather and climate, complementing modern scientific methods and technology," Dr Rob Vertessy, Bureau of Meteorology Director said.

ECU Cultural Awareness Officer, Mr Jason Barrow, has worked on Aboriginal cultural projects for more than 15 years, and was the key cultural advisor on the project.

His cultural background and experience has allowed him to pick up on the many subtle environmental changes that occur throughout the year, and the relationship this has with our weather patterns.

"I thoroughly enjoy reading the country around me and being able to share what I see with others who are interested in learning about where they live. If more people can tune into their surroundings, then we'll start to appreciate what we have rather than continually looking to change it," Mr Barrow said.

"It also makes the commute to and from work far more enjoyable when you actually 'see' the plants and animals going about their business, letting us know what sort of weather we can expect at particular times of the year, or even giving us an insight into what's in store for the weekend."

The Nyoongar seasons can be long or short and are indicated by what is happening and changing around us rather than by dates on a calendar.

This six-season calendar is extremely important to Nyoongar people, as it is guided by what nature is doing at every stage of the year, as well as and also helps develop an understanding and respect for the land in relation to plant and animal fertility cycles and land and animal preservation.

For further information on the Nyoongar Weather Calendar, visit: www.bom.gov.au/iwk/nyoongar

2013 Australia Day Honours for Nyoongar Elder

Highly respected member of the Nyoongar community, Mr Ben Taylor was recently recognised in the 2013 Australia Day Honours.

A tireless campaigner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights for many years, Mr Taylor was awarded a MEMBER (AM) IN THE GENERAL DIVISION 'for significant service to the Indigenous community of Western Australia through contributions to a range of social justice and humanitarian rights issues'.

Kurongkurl Katitjin is fortunate to have Mr Taylor closely aligned with ECU's Elder-in-Residence Dr Noel Nannup and extends our congratulations to Mr Taylor on this well deserved achievement.



Professor Colleen Hayward AM officially launching the website



Dr Noel Nannup (left) with Ben Taylor AM

Nyoongar Season: About Birak

Birak is a time for burning, with many fires being started by lightening strikes from the summer thunder storms that should continue in-between some periods of hot and steamy conditions.

Some respite will be felt along the coastal areas with an afternoon sea breeze helping to bring a cooler change, which is why the coast was a well favoured place to be at this time of the year.

This almost clockwork cycle of easterly winds in the morning and seas breezes in the afternoon, meant that traditionally this was the burning time of year for Nyoongars as they burnt the country in mosaic patterns. Interestingly nowadays, Birak season is now the start of the fire ban season.

Burning the country was done for several reasons including – fuel reduction, increasing the grazing pastures for animals (game), to aid in seed germination for some plants and for ease of mobility across the country.

Traditionally, this was a good time to collect bush honey made by the many different native bees that had made good use of the abundance of flowers. It was also a good time to make reed bags for carrying things as life was centred adjacent to the wetlands where various reeds could be utilised.

In addition to this, it was also a good season to collect wattle seeds after their flowering from the previous season for grinding into flour for breads and dampers.

Around the gardens of the Kurongkurl Katitjin building, you will see the wonderful flowers of the Coral Gum (*E. torquata*) and the Fuchsia Gum (*E. forrestiana*). You will also see loads of new growth on many of the Eucalypts (or Gum trees) and the Banksias, as they all look to put their new leaves out to work in the sun shine before the full force of summer arrives.

Furthur around the Perth area, you'll see the full displays from the Mooja trees (*Nyutsia floribunda* or Australian Christmas tree) with their bright almost florescent orange/yellow flowers interspersed with the yellow flowers from the Candle Banksias (*B. attenuata*).



You may also notice the Monarch or Wanderer Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) as pictured, lining river beds and in wetland areas.

For the animals, there are now many fledglings now venturing out of nests, though some still staying close to their parents.

There have even been some second nesting's in some locations which have seen the Magpie swooping season last longer in these areas.

On the insect front, with a dry Makuru season in the cold months of the year followed by a warm but wet Kamberang and the warm rains continuing in Birak, we will again see some big numbers of insects in the seasons to come.



Jason Barrow

Kurongkurl Katitjin Cultural Awareness Officer

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Wongi Nyoongar – Talking Nyoongar

In this edition of Wongi Nyoongar, we take a look at some of the insects and smaller animals that are in abundance at this time of the year.

Nyoongar word	Pronunciation	English translation
Ngarna	Narn-na	Caterpillar
Bindi – bindi	Bin-dee Bin-dee	Moth
Djidily	Jid-ill-ee	Grasshopper
Bidit	Bid-it	Ant
Kirlar	Ker-lar	Bull Ant/Sargent Ant
Boodjark	Boo-jark	Maggots
Nort	Nort	Fly
Noordoo	Noor-doo	Blow Fly
Kambar	Kam-bar	Worm
Yilar	Yil-ar	Earth Worm
Yok-djerap	Yok-jer-ap	Lady Bird/Bug

Insects play an important role in the environment and have a variety of jobs. From aerating the soil, pollinating blossoms, and control insect and plant pests; they also decompose dead materials to reintroduce nutrients into the soil.

Insects are also mother nature's weather predictors. Some insects display a range of behaviors, signifying sudden or an impending changes in the weather.

In addition to seeing changes in plants and animals, insects remain a particularly useful indicator in preparing for the next season.

Nyoongar Story Time

Birak Karla

During this season the Nyoongar people placed great emphasis on the time honoured practice of burning boodja (country).

It should be noted that nature was more than capable of doing its own burning, as this season was the beginning of the lightening strikes that came with the onset of stormy weather.

As with all parts of this amazing country, the Aboriginal people understood that in order to live successfully on this land, they had to make karla (fire) their friend.



Dr Noel Nannup

ECU Cultural Ambassador and Kurongkurl Katitjin Elder-in-Residence

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Kurongkurl Katitjin visits the Wollotuka Institute



Wollotuka's unique Birabahn building at the University's Callaghan campus



(From left to right) Tracey Lee Edwards, Wollotuka's Madelene Davy and Elder Brownyn Chambers with Professor Colleen Hayward AM

Earlier in January, Kurongkurl Katitjin's Head of Centre Professor Colleen Hayward AM and Communications and Events Officer Tracey Lee Edwards went on a two-day visit to the University of Newcastle (New South Wales), with a particular interest in their Indigenous Centre, the Wollotuka Institute.

The visit was an opportunity to discuss the University's Indigenous initiatives and specialist programs based within the Institute, as well as share some of Edith Cowan University's own developments in this space.

Wollotuka's Community Engagement Officer Joe Griffin helped facilitate the visit, which included small meetings with the University's International Office and the Equity/Diversity Unit.

A tour of the Callaghan campus, including Wollotuka's unique Birabahn building and the Gibalee Centre at the Central Coast campus was also part of the visit.

Kurongkurl Katitjin would like to thank the staff of the Wollotuka Institute, in particular Joe Griffin, for being such gracious and generous hosts, not only with their time, but with their knowledge and insight.

For more information on the Wollotuka Institute, visit: www.newcastle.edu.au/wollotuka

SBS launches new free-to-air Indigenous Channel

Australian television history was made, with the launch of the first free-to-air national Indigenous television network on 12 December 2012.

The official launch at Uluru featured a Welcome to Country by Yankunytjatjara elder and traditional owner Uncle Bob Randall, followed by a celebration concert hosted by Enie Dingo and starring Indigenous artists including Christine Anu, Troy Cassar Daley, Casey Donovan and Archie Roach.

National Indigenous Television's (NITV) relaunch as a national free-to-air channel will make it available to all Australian viewers for the first time, after 5 1/2 years broadcasting primarily on pay-TV and satellite.

Since beginning in 2007, NITV has shown approximately 2,000 hours of content from genres ranging from sport, news and current affairs, culture, music and children's programs.

It is the only national channel in Australia that is dedicated to reflecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

The new channel can be found by tuning in to channel 34 on a digital TV, PVR or set-top box. NITV is also broadcast on Foxtel channel 180.

For more information on NITV at SBS, visit: www.sbs.com.au/nitv

Mentoring Indigenous students for the future

ECU's School of Education have piloted a new mentoring program for Aboriginal students, which is successfully helping them transition from high school to university.

Developed in 2011, and trialled at Mount Lawley Senior High School, the Aboriginal Excellence and Tertiary Access Mentor Program focused on ways to introduce year eight and nine Aboriginal students to the tertiary environment.

The program has a proven success rate, with 80 per cent of students saying they were 'very interested' in attending university after completion.

The program also focused on building the cultural knowledge and mentoring skills of ECU's mentors from the School of Education.

Program activities included:

- Researching the life stories of successful Indigenous ECU graduates;
- A tour of the ECU Mount Lawley Campus and its facilities;
- Participation in the Indigenous War Veterans commemoration event; and
- A cultural tour of Kings Park.

For many Mount Lawley students, having a mentor was a great way to talk to someone about their future.

"It was easier to talk to the mentor because it was a one-on-one experience; they listened to me closely and helped me gain some confidence," one student said.

The mentors embraced the opportunity to further explore Indigenous culture and enhance their own knowledge from within the program.

"I found it important to learn about the challenges facing Indigenous students in regards to educational opportunities and how I as a teacher can play a supportive role in their educational journey," one mentor said.

At the start of the program, statistics showed that 20 per cent indicated that they were 'very interested' in attending University, with the remaining 80 per cent showing 'little or no interest'.

At the end of the program, at least 80 per cent of students were now 'very interested' in University, with the remaining 20 per cent 'extremely interested'.

The pilot program, which was held throughout 2011 and 2012, was funded through the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) and enabled 25 students from ECU and Mount Lawley Senior High School to participate.

A joint initiative of ECU and Mount Lawley Senior High School, the program was lead by School of Education's Dr Deborah Callcott, Kurongkurl Katitjin's Professor Colleen Hayward AM and Mount Lawley Senior High School's Dr Phil Paioff.

The program will continue in 2013 with the support of Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME).

HealthInfoNet helping to ‘close the gap’ with regional workshops

The ECU-based Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet has been delivering a range of workshops across WA to increase access to, and use of, its comprehensive free web resources and services on Indigenous health.

The innovative program, funded by Healthway, provides interactive training to Indigenous and other health workers to increase their awareness of HealthInfoNet and equip them with the skills to obtain the health information needed to optimise their practice.

With the support of the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia (AHCWA), the program provides special attention to workers employed by Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Services (ACCHSs).



Participants attending a workshop in Kalgoorlie

Ms Maureen Crowther of the Kimberley Training Institute, based in Broome, said the workshops opened her eyes to a range of health resources.

“It was an extremely well run workshop that provided us with useful knowledge,” she said.

“HealthInfoNet is a site I can see myself using regularly for evidence based, up-to-date knowledge that is free to download. Thank you all the ECU team and others involved for providing us with a great resource for improving the health and well being of Indigenous Australians”

With the Kimberly, Pilbara, Gascoyne, Midwest and Goldfields regions now covered, the South West and Great Southern are the last country locations to be visited, with the remainder of the workshops completed in Perth.

HealthInfoNet Senior Research Officer and Workshop Coordinator Michelle Catto believes these workshops will help many workers in the Health industry.

“These workshops help to build the capacity of the frontline health workforce and assist participants in ‘closing the gap’ in Indigenous health,” she said.

“It is anticipated that this pilot project will prove successful in increasing use of internet-based knowledge and influencing the practice of frontline health workers.”

For further information about HealthInfoNet, visit: www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au

Australian Indigenous HealthBulletin Vol 13 Issue 1 now available

The January to March 2013 issue of the Australian Indigenous HealthBulletin is now ‘in progress’ and available online.

The Australian Indigenous HealthBulletin facilitates access to information of relevance to Australian Indigenous health and aims to keep people informed of current events of relevance, as well as information about recent research and resources. The HealthBulletin is published as four cumulative issues per year.

To view the latest issue, visit: www.healthbulletin.org.au

Staff Snapshot

Fiona Stuart



ECU-AIME Program Coordinator

Favourite book:

The Power of One
by Bryce Courtenay

Favourite music:

Blues and Roots

Favourite food:

Potato Salad from Passione Deli in Kingsley

Favourite TV Program:

Spicks & Specks and Australian Story

Favourite Movie:

The Little Rascals

If you could meet anyone, who would it be?

Nelson Mandela

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

I've played piano since I was 5 years old.

ECU partners with AIME

ECU has recently entered into a three year partnership with the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME), to bring this important program to Western Australia.

AIME is a young Indigenous corporation that partners volunteer university students in a one-on-one mentoring relationship with Indigenous high school students.

After starting with 25 mentors and 25 mentees in 2005, the program has now partnered 1,250 university students one-on-one with 1,250 Indigenous high school students across the east coast of Australia.

AIME's ambitious objective is to expand its numbers to reach 6,000 Indigenous students nationally, and have every one of those students finishing school at the same rate as every Australian child by 2020.

Beginning in 2013, and in conjunction with Curtin University, Murdoch University and the University of Notre Dame in Australia, AIME will link Indigenous high school students and university students in WA to improve high school completion rates and encourage Indigenous students to think more broadly about their post-secondary school options.

In its first year, ECU-AIME will provide a mentoring experience for up to 100 Indigenous high school students in Years 9, 10, 11 and 12 from the northern and north-eastern suburbs of Perth.

Overseeing the ECU partnership, AIME has employed Fiona Stuart as the ECU-AIME Program Coordinator.

A recent graduate of ECU, Fiona has a background in Youth Work and has previously been working for the City of Joondalup, delivering a youth outreach program providing support, mediation, advocacy and referral to Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people present in public spaces.

For further information about AIME, visit:

www.aimementoring.com

Contact:

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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.

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- Either complete the online form under the News and Events section at www.kk.ecu.edu.au; or
- email Tracey Lee Edwards at tracey.edwards@ecu.edu.au with your name, title, organisation and contact details (including email).



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