

Re-Framing Indigenous Biography



15-16 November 2018

The Australian Centre on China in the World

Building 188, Fellows Lane

The Australian National University, Canberra

This conference is generously supported by the National Centre of Biography, the ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences, and the Australian Research Council.

Image Credit: Jack Dale, 'History painting', 2003.

Conference Organisers:

Dr Shino Konishi

Dr Malcolm Allbrook

Emeritus Professor Tom Griffiths

For further information please contact Shino Konishi at shino.konishi@uwa.edu.au

Program Day One: Thursday 15 November 2018	
8.30-9.00am	Registration
9.00-10.30am	<p>Welcome and Introduction <i>Chair: Malcolm Allbrook</i></p> <p>Tyronne Bell: Welcome to Country</p> <p>Melanie Nolan: Welcome from the National Centre for Biography</p>
	<p>Keynote 1. <i>Chair: Tom Griffiths</i></p> <p>Alexis Wright, 'Alexis Wright speaks with Tom Griffiths about her biography, <i>Tracker</i>'</p>
10.30-11.00am	Morning Tea
11.00-12.00pm	<p>Session 1. Challenges <i>Chair: Shino Konishi</i></p> <p>Michael A. McDonnell: 'Re-Centring Native American History: The Opportunities—and Limits—of Biography in Eighteenth-Century North America'</p> <p>Julie Gough: 'The Missing: The lost Aboriginal children of Van Diemen's Land'</p>
12.00-1.00pm	Lunch
1.00-2.30pm	<p>Session 2. Ways <i>Chair: Steve Kinnane</i></p> <p>Kate Fullagar: 'Biography in Eighteenth-Century Tōtaiete Mā: Insights from the Whole Lives of Pūrea, Tūpaia, and Hitihiti'</p> <p>Shino Konishi: 'Embodying Indigenous Biography'</p> <p>Arini Loader: 'Māori in the Mirror: Approaching 19th Century Māori Lives'</p>
2.30-3.00pm	Afternoon Tea
3.00-4.00pm	<p>Biography Slam 1 <i>Chair: Malcolm Allbrook</i></p> <p>Laurie Allen: 'Guldy: An Indigenous Ned Kelly'</p> <p>Alex Bond and Libby Connors: 'The Making of a Warrior in a time of Frontier War'</p> <p>Jodi Haines: 'Charlie Dennison is my Great Grandfather'</p> <p>Brenda L. Croft: 'Two promising lads: Joseph and Lindsay Croft'</p> <p>Lucy Davies and Kate Laing: 'Joyce Clague'</p>
4.15pm	Coach transport to National Portrait Gallery

5.00pm	Keynote 2. Chair: Kate Fullagar Alice Te Punga Somerville: 'Te Rangihiroa, Oodgeroo, Te Hurinui, Hamuera and me: Indigenous biographies without borders'
6.00pm	Cocktail Reception and Gallery Visit
7.40pm	Coach transport to ANU

Program Day Two: Friday 16 November 2018

9.00-10.00am	Keynote 3. Chair: Shino Konishi Ashley Glassburn Falzetti: 'Both/And: Anti-colonial Approaches to Writing Indigenous Life Stories'
10.00-10.30am	Morning Tea
10.30-12.00pm	Session 3. Stories Chair: Melanie Nolan Grace Karskens: 'Nah Doongh's Story: Aboriginal history, biography and memory in Western Sydney' Katerina Teaiwa: 'Finding Nimanoa's Daughters' Natalie Harkin: 'Archival-poetics and Aboriginal Domestic Labour Stories from South Australia'
12.00-1.00pm	Lunch
1.00-2.30pm	Session 4. Futures Chair: Sam Furphy Malcolm Allbrook: Biographies of Deep Time Figures Alistair Paterson: Archaeological Biographies of Historical Experiences Leah Lui-Chivizhe: 'A biography or life history of the Auridh mask'
2.30-3.00pm	Afternoon Tea
3.00-4.00pm	Biography Slam 2 Chair: Tom Griffiths Louise Martin-Chew: 'Fiona Foley: Provocateur: Writing her life' Suzanne Spinner: 'All-About Rover Thomas' Alec O'Halloran: 'The Master from Marnpi' Kathryn Wells: 'Georgia Lee (Dulcie Pitt), 1921-2010'
4.00-4.30pm	Closing Remarks: Malcolm Allbrook, Tom Griffiths and Shino Konishi

ABSTRACTS

KEYNOTE LECTURES

Alexis Wright speaks with Tom Griffiths about her biography, *Tracker*

Alexis Wright

Alexis Wright is the author of the award-winning biography, *Tracker* (Giramondo, 2017), a collective memoir of the Indigenous political thinker and activist, Tracker Tilmouth, who died in Darwin in 2015 aged 62. In this session, Alexis will be interviewed by Tom Griffiths about her bold and compelling work of collective and oral Aboriginal storytelling. How did this unusual biography come about and what new forms of Australian life writing might it inspire?

Professor Alexis Wright is a member of the Waanyi nation of the Gulf of Carpentaria. She is an author and essayist writing in fiction and non-fiction. Wright has written widely on Indigenous rights and has organised two successful Indigenous Constitutional Conventions in Central Australia, *Today We Talk About Tomorrow* (1993) and the Kalkaringi Convention (1998). Recent publications include the collective memoir *Tracker* (2017) which was awarded the 2018 Stella Prize for Literature and Magarey Medal; the essay *What Happens When You Tell Somebody Else's Story* (2016) which was awarded the Hilary McPhee Award 2016; *The Swan Book* (2013) which was awarded the Australian Literature Society Gold Medal 2014; and *Carpentaria* (2006) which was awarded the 2007 Miles Franklin Award. She is the Boisbouvier Chair in Australian Literature at the University of Melbourne.

Professor Tom Griffiths is Emeritus Professor of History at ANU, Chair of the Editorial Board of the Australian Dictionary of Biography, and author of the collective biography *The Art of Time Travel: Historians and their Craft* (2016).

Te Rangihiroa, Oodgeroo, Te Hurinui, Hamuera and me: Indigenous biographies without borders

Alice Te Punga Somerville

What borders, peripheries and connections matter when we write—or write about—Indigenous biographies? What happens when actual Indigenous people inevitably exceed the stories of encounter and connection to place that we try to tell about them? What responsibilities do biographers have to tell, or refuse to tell, about individual lives?

In this talk, I critically reflect on four biographical projects focused respectively on Te Rangihiroa (Sir Peter Buck), Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Pei Te Hurinui Jones and Hamuera Te

Punga. Each of these projects emerged from distinct research questions and each focuses on Indigenous people whose lives have captured my interest but who have also themselves been engaged in various kinds of life writing. In the context of a dominant preference for subsuming Indigenous lives within the story of their occupying nation states, all of them operated transnationally in ways that strain against restrictive national accounts of who they were, and that extend our understanding of Indigenous mobility and global connections in the twentieth century. While the first three are very well known public figures, the fourth makes barely a ripple on archival pages. My own connection with each of them varies too, raising different questions about who has the right (or responsibility) to write about whom.

The title of the talk gestures towards Michael Moore's film *Roger and Me*, in which the filmmaker's ostensible desire to meet one on one with a prominent individual provides an opportunity to explore the broader contexts of encounter and power in which their lives are both enmeshed. Likewise, I consider the four projects alongside each other with the aim of foregrounding the vastly different pathways and stakes of four very different Indigenous lives and five very different Indigenous biographers.

Associate Professor Alice Te Punga Somerville (Te Āti Awa, Taranaki) writes and teaches at the intersections of Indigenous, Pacific, literary, and cultural studies. She has taught English at Victoria University of Wellington and University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Indigenous Studies at Macquarie University, and is now an associate professor of Māori and Indigenous Studies at The University of Waikato/*Te Whare Wananga o Waikato*. Her first book was *Once Were Pacific: Māori Connections to Oceania* (University of Minnesota Press, 2012), and she is working on two book projects: "Indigenous-Indigenous Encounters" and "Ghost Writers: The Māori Books You've Never Read". She also writes the occasional poem.

Both/And: Anti-colonial Approaches to Writing Indigenous Life Stories

Ashley Glassburn Falzetti

Indigenous voices can be rare in colonial archives, and their presence nearly always serves imperial interests. As we work to define the best practices in Indigenous history, we must cord together the dual projects of critique and construction—disrupting the coloniality of history-making practices and the speculative vision of an anti-colonial Indigenous approach to writing and validating history. Drawing on the history of the Miami Nation and their most famous historical figure, Mahkoonsahkwa (Frances Slocum, 1773-1838) I explore how we can use standpoint theory to think through a distinctly Indigenous approach to biography.

Dr Ashley Glassburn Falzetti is an assistant professor of women's and gender studies at the University of Windsor in Ontario and holds a PhD in women's and gender studies from

Rutgers University (2014). She is a member of the Miami Nation of Indiana and serves as the co-chair of the Indigenous Peoples caucus of the National Women's Studies Association. She has published in *Biography*, *Settler Colonial Studies*, and elsewhere. Her research draws on Miami historical narratives and contemporary political projects in order to explore the dynamic of race, land, and historical evidence in constituting Indigenous subjectivities.

PAPERS

Re-Centring Native American History: The Opportunities—and Limits—of Biography in Eighteenth-Century North America

Michael A. McDonnell

This paper will highlight some of the ways in which a biographical approach can illuminate new pathways for historians, but also its limits. I started my last project by focusing on what some call a metis 'cultural broker.' Imperial officials privileged such men (and more rarely, women) in their orders and correspondence because they were often so dependent on them—as interpreters, mediators, and go-betweens. They were among the few who had access to Indian communities and knowledge about the politics of a world beyond the ken of Europeans. For incoming post commanders, lost missionaries, intrepid new traders in the region—and subsequent historians—men and women who had connections in Indian country were an invaluable resource, and helped build a "middle ground" between natives and newcomers. Yet I eventually realised that these go-betweens often played only a secondary, supporting role. A tentative "middle ground" might have been established between Europeans and Indians at colonial outposts, and that middle ground sometimes acted as a bridge between two cultures, or even among many diverse peoples. But for Indians, European posts were only one among many sites of meeting, encounter, and community. Forts and posts such as the one I examined at Michilimackinac were at the centre of European worlds in the Great Lakes, but they were often only at the edge, or at the margins, of a vast Indian country that surrounded them. Though we have for a long time privileged the stories of a handful of European missionaries, traders, explorers, troops, and settlers who seemingly foreshadowed the world to come, for much of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and into the nineteenth century, the Great Lakes remained Indian country. The history of individual cultural brokers cannot stand apart—it has to be woven into that rich and compelling Indian world. Through biography, then, I learned the primary story of this era and this region had to be a Native-driven story.

Professor Michael A. McDonnell has published numerous books and articles on the American Revolution and Native American History. His first book, *The Politics of War: Race, Class, and Conflict in Revolution Virginia* (2007), won the New South Wales Premier's History Prize in 2008, and his second book, *Masters of Empire: Great Lakes Indians and the Making of America* (2015), won a Michigan State Historical Society Award and a Western

Historical Association Prize, and helps re-centre early American history from the perspective of Indian country. He has also co-edited three other collections of works, including *Remembering the Revolution: Memory, History, and Nation-Making in the US from Independence to the Civil War* (2013), *Rethinking the Age of Revolution* (2017), and most recently, with Kate Fullagar, *Facing Empire: Indigenous Experiences in a Revolutionary Age* (forthcoming, 2018). He has published numerous articles on the American Revolution, winning the Lester Cappon Prize for the best article published in the *William and Mary Quarterly* in 2006, and his work featured in the Organization of American Historians' *Best American History Essays* (2008). He is currently working on two book projects that deal with the American Revolution and its legacy: one entitled *The Revolution in Black American Life* (with Clare Corbould), and the other entitled *War Stories: The Meaning of the American Revolution*.

The Missing: The lost Aboriginal children of Van Diemen's Land

Julie Gough

Between 1804 and 1840 more than 200 Aboriginal children lived with colonists in Trowunna, or Van Diemen's Land. Whether for short or extended periods most disappeared beyond the archives, into a nascent oblivion. The uneasy permanency of their status as missing, presumed dead, rather than being brought into full being as ancestors or kin is in part due to no cohesive method yet drawn to map their lives and interconnections across Aboriginal and colonial society in Tasmania. This paper describes some challenges, encountered and expected, in working from these children's, to date slim, biographies.

Dr Julie Gough is an artist, writer and curator based in Hobart. Her research and art practice involves uncovering and re-presenting often conflicting and subsumed histories, many referring to her family's experiences as Tasmanian Aboriginal people. Gough's mother's family are Trawlwoolway people, originally from Tebrikunna in far north east Tasmania, and her paternal heritage is Scottish and Irish. Currently working as a Curator, Indigenous cultures at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Gough, since 1994, has exhibited in more than 130 exhibitions including: *Defying Empire*, National Gallery of Australia, 2017; *THE NATIONAL*, MCA, 2017; *With Secrecy and Despatch*, Campbelltown Arts Centre, 2016; *undisclosed*, National Gallery of Australia, 2012; *Clemenger Award*, National Gallery of Victoria, 2010; *Biennial of Sydney*, 2006; *Liverpool Biennial*, UK, 2001; *Perspecta*, AGNSW, 1995. Gough holds a PhD from the University of Tasmania (2001), a Masters degree (Visual Arts) University of London, Goldsmiths College (1998), and Bachelor degrees in Visual Arts, Prehistory and English Literature. Her artwork is held in most Australian state and national gallery collections, and she is represented by Bett Gallery, Hobart. <http://juliegough.net>

Biography in Eighteenth-Century Tōtaiete Mā: Insights from the Whole Lives of Pūrea, Tupaia, and Hitihiti

Kate Fullagar

The Tahitian archipelago (or Tōtaiete Mā) features relatively prominently in the eighteenth-century chapter of world history—it is either the exotic jewel of Europe’s final push to map the globe or the exemplary model of intense geopolitical change within the Pacific zone. Yet, despite the fame of some of its eighteenth-century denizens such as Mai (c.1753-c.1779), Tahitian history is rarely told in biographical form. Like much of the Pacific, the distant past of Tōtaiete Mā is considered too lacking in sources to offer many rich biographical examples. This paper explores what kinds of insights might derive if historians took the plunge to rethink the kinds of sources necessary for biography in this field. It focuses on three individuals in particular—the well-known navigator-priest Tupaia, the modestly-known chieftainess Pūrea, and the little-known itinerant Hitihiti. It argues that an indigenous-centred, whole-of-life approach to these individuals reframes the world-historical significance of Tōtaiete Mā.

Dr Kate Fullagar is a senior lecturer in modern history at Macquarie University, Sydney. Her most recent books include *The Savage Visit: New World Peoples and Popular Imperial Culture in Britain, 1710-1795* (Berkeley, 2012); (as editor) *The Atlantic World in the Antipodes: Effects and Transformations since the Eighteenth Century* (Newcastle, 2012), and, as co-editor with Michael McDonnell, *Facing Empire: Indigenous Experiences in a Revolutionary Age* (Baltimore, 2018). Forthcoming is a Yale University Press book on three different eighteenth-century lives—a Native American warrior, a Pacific Islander traveler, and the British artist who painted them both (New Haven, 2019). She is also leading a project on the comparative nexus of portraiture and biography with both the National Portrait Gallery of Australia and the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery.

Embodying Indigenous Biography

Shino Konishi

A key challenge biographers face in writing the lives of Indigenous people is identifying and recovering sufficient sources and evidence, particularly for individuals who ‘flourished’ before the mid-20th century. In lieu of direct interviews and conversations with the person, or, in the case of many Indigenous historical figures, access to their own first-hand writings, biographers can find few traditional ways of gaining insights into the lived experiences of the individual.

In this paper I will examine recent studies which propose various biographical methods centering on the body, such as Moses Ochonu’s ‘sensory’ approach or Maggie O’Neill’s ‘walking biographies’ as well as approaches in the history of emotion and embodiment, in

order to explore how phenomenological approaches might help us to flesh out the lives of Indigenous individuals in the past.

Dr Shino Konishi is a Yawuru historian based in the School of Humanities and School of Indigenous Studies at the University of Western Australia. She is currently an ARC research fellow, working on the project 'An Indigenous Australian Dictionary of Biography' with Dr Malcolm Allbrook and Professor Tom Griffiths, and a CI with the ARC Centre of Excellence on the History of Emotion. Her publications include *The Aboriginal Male in the Enlightenment World* (London, 2012).

Māori in the Mirror: Approaching 19th Century Māori Lives

Arini Loader

At the New Zealand Historical Association conference in 2017, historian Monty Soutar (Ngāti Porou) offered four life-lessons learnt from his over 20-year experience of researching the 28th Māori Battalion. In this paper, I apply these lessons as a means of approaching 19th century Māori lives, of approaching ancestors I will never meet. Specifically, I read a manuscript written by Tāmihana Te Rauparaha, son of the famed chief Te Rauparaha, on the life of his father through the lessons articulated by Soutar.

Dr Arini Loader is a lecturer at Victoria University of Wellington, Te Whare Wānanga o Te Ūpoko o Te Ika a Māui, in the School of History, Philosophy, Political Science and International Relations, Te Kura Aro Whakamuri, Rapunga Whakaaro, Matai Tōrangapū me Te Ao. She studies historical texts written by Māori, in Māori, and she is interested in the Māori past and how this past informs the present.

Nah Doongh's Story: Aboriginal history, biography and memory in Western Sydney

Grace Karskens

Nah Doongh, known as 'Black Nellie' or 'Queen Nellie', was born about 1800 in the Country around present-day Kingswood, just southeast of Mooroo Morack, Penrith, on the Nepean River. She was among the first generation of Aboriginal children who grew up in a conquered land. In her eighties, she camped on what was left of the Castlereagh Common, north of Penrith, and in 1886 she befriended Sarah Shand, a local painter and writer and doctor's wife recently arrived from England. Shand published detailed reminiscences of Nah Doongh in 1914.

Because details of Penrith's Aboriginal people are so scant, and because Nah Doongh was well known, she often appears in local histories, her poignant photographs reproduced alongside the snatches of her voice, filtered through Sarah Shand's reminiscences. But Nah

Doongh seems fixed in time and place in these accounts—as if she had always been old, always there, always alone. Where had she been over her long life? What had she done? Where was her family? Was she really the ‘last of her tribe’, as the local white community complacently called her?

Ironically it is only by looking outside Nah Doongh’s own Country that her story can be pieced together—albeit tentatively. So far these fragments of evidence suggest not a static, pathetic figure, locked ‘outside history’ and fading away at the margins of white society, but a life of surprising, strategic mobility. In her younger years Nah Doongh moved higher up the Nepean River and perhaps even to other rivers, and she appears to have been connected to the network of interrelated Aboriginal families and groups spread across the Cumberland Plain. She also actively fostered friendships with white families, particularly women. Her life revolved around personal relationships and family; in her old age the enduring pull of her own Country drew her back to her birthplace near Moorroo Morack.

Professor Grace Karskens is a historian, writer and teacher. She is a leading authority on early colonial Australia and also works in cross-cultural, environmental and urban history. Grace’s books include *The Colony: A History of Early Sydney*, which won the 2010 Prime Minister’s Literary Award for Non-Fiction and the US Urban History Association’s prize for Best Book 2010. Her next book is *People of the River*, a history of Aboriginal and settler peoples on the Hawkesbury-Nepean River from deep time to about 1830.

Finding Nimanoa's Daughters

Katerina Teaiwa

Nimanoa is an ancestral and spiritual figure in Kiribati (formerly Tungaru), a woman who challenged Tungaruan gender norms and performed activities such as navigation and sailing that were strictly limited to male participation. In the 1990s, in a context where many Pacific women were rarely attracted to western forms of feminism, my later elder sister, Teresia Teaiwa, began to frame her feminist research and poetry as a process of "Searching for Nei Nimanoa." In 2018 I consulted an I-Kiribati elder and was encouraged to pursue a project of "Finding Nimanoa's Daughters." The list of entries of Pacific figures for the Australian Dictionary of Biography has few women and even fewer indigenous Pacific women. My presentation reflects on not just the process of inclusion and equity but on how we might extend the rationales of inclusion in the ADB to ancestral figures and contexts of Australian colonial and business intervention and exploitation in the Pacific Islands. The "Daughters of Nimanoa" on Banaba, for example, in the early 1900s, stood up to Australian mining attempts and held onto their trees in the face of bulldozers. I expand on these and other stories of anonymous but significant Pacific women. How would we present their stories in a national dictionary of biography?

Associate Professor Katerina Teaiwa is Associate Professor of Pacific Studies in the School of Culture, History and Language, College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University. She is the Vice-President of the Australian Association for Pacific Studies and Chair of the Oceania Working Party of the Australian Dictionary of Biography.

Archival-poetics and Aboriginal Domestic Labour Stories from South Australia

Natalie Harkin

Most Aboriginal families I know, including my own, have an indentured labour or domestic service story. Unlike research undertaken in other States, these stories are invisible and not widely acknowledged or understood as significant in larger narratives of South Australia's history. This paper will present the beginnings of an early-career research project that aims to honour individual and collective stories in unique ways, including the notable work and impact of the Council for Aboriginal Women in South Australia (CAWSA) established in 1966. It will present 'Archival-poetics' as a critical-creative method of resistance and transformation used to trace, expose and respond to the colonial archive, particularly those assimilation-based policies targeting girls for removal from their families, enabling indentured domestic labour. Such records trigger questions of surveillance, representation and agency, and bear witness to colonial process of knowledge formation. Critically, this project supports women to tell their own stories through new poetic offerings, for future archives: one way to repatriate love to our Old ones and generate new knowledge with healing, decolonising intent.

Dr Natalie Harkin is a Narungga woman and activist-poet from South Australia. She is a Research Fellow at Flinders University with an interest in decolonising state archives, currently engaging archival-poetic methods to research and document Aboriginal women's domestic service and labour histories in SA. Her words have been installed and projected in exhibitions comprising text-object-video projection, including collaboration with the Unbound Collective in SA. She has written for a number of literary journals and her first poetry manuscript, *Dirty Words*, was published by Cordite Books in 2015.

Biographies of Deep Time Figures

Malcolm Allbrook

One of the critical questions in the Indigenous ADB project is how we can transcend the 'great divide' of 1788, when European colonisation also signalled the start of written documentation, and consider the extremely long Aboriginal history of the Australian continent. This paper asks if it is possible to write the biographies of deep time figures, and if so how these biographies might be framed. What insights can be gained from archaeology and other scientific disciplines when they are considered alongside

Aboriginal knowledges? Can the sagas of creation and law-giving be thought of as biography?

Dr Malcolm Allbrook is a research fellow in the National Centre of Biography, School of History, ANU, and managing editor of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. After working with native title representative bodies in the Kimberley, Pilbara and Gascoyne, he completed a PhD in history at Griffith University. He has been at ANU since 2011. The author of *Henry Prinsep's Empire* (2014), and co-author of *Never Stand Still: Life, Land and Politics in the Kimberley* (2013), *Carlotta's Perth* (2017), and *Barddabardda Wodjenangorddee: We're Telling All Of You: The Creation, History and People of Dambeemangaddee Country* (2017), he has also authored numerous articles and chapters. With Shino Konishi and Tom Griffiths, he is a chief investigator on the ARC Discovery Project 'An Indigenous Australian Dictionary of Biography.'

Archaeological Biographies of Historical Experiences

Alistair Paterson

Biographies pose a specific challenge for archaeology. How does one pivot from the material evidence deriving from past human endeavour to forms of biography that typically require a sense of an individual and their achievements—how does archaeology inform on the history of a historical person? Archaeological evidence is often the record of cumulative events, further blurring past individuals and highlighting instead shared cultural practices of past communities and people. With the arrival of outsiders in recent centuries Aboriginal individuals often remained unnamed, making biography difficult. In 19th and 20th century settings archaeology provides material insights into Indigenous Australians' history, yet it is often difficult to relate these records to historical individuals—despite their contribution to significant national stories. This paper invites a future form of archaeologically-generated biography of unnamed Aboriginal people who represent broader patterns of historical experience.

Professor Alistair Paterson is an Australian Research Council (ARC) Future Fellow in Archaeology at the University of Western Australia. His research examines the historical archaeology of colonial coastal contact and settlement in Australia's Northwest and the Indian Ocean. His key interests are Western Australia and Indian Ocean history, Aboriginal Australia, Dutch East India Company, colonialism and exploration, rock art, and the history of collecting in Western Australia in collaboration with the Western Australian Museum, State Library, Art Gallery, and the British Museum. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3370-7390>

A biography or life history of the Auridh mask

Leah Lui-Chivizhe

In July 1836 a large turtle shell mask was stolen from its keeping place on Auridh in the central Torres Strait. Within months the mask, which had been adorned over many years with human skulls, sea shells and coated with red ochre, was deposited with the Australian Museum in Sydney. The skulls had been identified as both European and 'native'.

How the mask became part of the Museum's collection and the inclusion of the skulls of Europeans reflect nineteenth century settler colonialism in northern Australia as well as Islander responses to the intrusions of outsiders. In settler narratives of the mask's removal, Islanders are sidelined as 'savage natives', the indiscriminate takers of heads and the makers of a 'gruesome trophy'. Absent is a narrative that considers the nature and complexities of Islanders' relationships with each other and the objects they made and used.

This presentation explores what a biography or life history of the Auridh mask can reveal about the material and spiritual pasts of Torres Strait people.

Dr Leah Lui-Chivizhe is a postdoctoral fellow in History at The University of Sydney and her research interests include Torres Strait cultural knowledge and histories, museum practice, gendered knowledge and labour history. Prior to taking her current positions, she lectured in Indigenous Australian Studies at The University of Sydney (2001-12) and the University of New South Wales (2013-17). Leah is a Torres Strait mainlander with extensive family connections to Mer, Erub, Mabuiag and Badu islands.

BIOGRAPHY SLAM

Guldy: An Indigenous Ned Kelly

Laurie Allen

Guldy (1796-c.1870) was an embittered cripple whose name struck fear into early colonists from the Hawkesbury River to Newcastle. He is said to have killed one man and almost killed several more, yet he was never punished for these crimes and died around seventy years of age after falling from a tree. Known as Devil-Devil, or Bumble because he had a deformed foot, Guldy defies such simple labels as warrior, resistance fighter, or criminal. Rather, he was an outrageous Ned Kelly figure, attacking both Aboriginal people and settlers seemingly on a whim, exhibiting a mixture of public bravado and private grievance.

The first Aboriginal man to be tried and convicted in the New South Wales Supreme Court (though never sentenced) Gully reminds us that Indigenous people in the nineteenth century were individuals, motivated as much by their own concerns as by the sweep of colonisation around them. His story should be remembered.

Laurie Allen has an Honours degree in German from the University of Sydney and an MPhil in Modern History from the University of Oxford. He is currently enrolled in the third year of a PhD candidature at the University of Newcastle.

The making of a Warrior in a time of frontier war

Alex Bond and Libby Connors

This paper will attempt to convey both the family history of Billy Barlow also known as Dr Ballow as told by one of his descendants and the complex evidence gleaned from “settler” documents.

Billy Barlow was a Kabi man from Bribie Island, Queensland. He married a girl named Lizzie and their grandchildren were born at Barambah Station at Goomeri in the Burnett District in the 1890s. That Billy survived the violence of the Brisbane frontier of the 1840s is remarkable for the white residents identified him as a significant young man as early as 1846 when he was linked to an attack by the Aboriginal leader Dundalli. His European name is significant, comically connoting an up and coming man of importance, but this stature was subsequently confirmed when he organised payback among the southeast Queensland nations for the arrest and execution of Dundalli in the years 1854-55. Between 1846 and 1854 there is piecemeal but intriguing evidence of Billy Barlow’s training by Dundalli which appears to be affirmed by the fact that he was one of the people Dundalli called to from the gallows. His actions in 1857 when he led an attack on two white men in rainforest on the Caboolture River attest to his commitment to his Law and his people. The circumstantial evidence strongly indicates that this attack was payback for the sexual assault of a Quandamooka girl in 1846.

Billy Barlow’s story is an important one as it recaptures traditional Aboriginal masculinity, its integrity and its protective aspects under the immense pressures of frontier war.

Alex Bond is a Gubbi Gubbi man and museum researcher.

Associate Professor Libby Connors is an Australian historian and the author of *Warrior* (Allen & Unwin 2015).

Charlie Dennison is my Great Grandfather

Jodi Haines

Charlie Dennison is my Great Grandfather. My dad's mother's father. He was born at Gil Gil Station, NSW in the 1840s and died in the 1950s at Goondiwindi Qld, ten years before I was born. He was son of a Goomeroi woman named Kitty, a tribal woman born before European occupation. He lived to about 110 and survived 16 prime ministers. He was gifted 600 acres of land which was then taken away and used to form the NSW Aboriginal community of Toomelah. Too many of our old people have gone and taken many yarns with them back to Goomeroi dreaming. There are hundreds, possibly thousands of descendants who walk with his pride in their hearts today who deserve to know more. His story is immense, accessible yet slightly buried. The gentle whispering of the gumtrees, the sunset reflections on the Macintyre river, the Tindale film showing a youthful man in his 90s building a canoe, an aunty today sharing memories of playing in his yard around his fig trees, poses a veil of questions and leaves a potential biography of possible answers that needs to be told.

Jodi Haines: I'm a Tasmanian Gamilaroy woman, currently working as an Associate Lecturer in the Riawunna Centre for Education, at the University of Tasmania. My recent published chapter in Anita Heiss' *Growing up Aboriginal in Australia* explains my Tasmanian Toomelah connection. I'm an experienced passionate singer songwriter and performer. I'm an ex-teacher, journalist and Mental Health worker to name just a few job titles. I'm a developing academic and writer, I think I've found my purpose. I'm currently talking with my family and community from Toomelah about researching Charlie Dennison's life. I'm currently exploring my Higher Research Degree pathway as the avenue to tell my great grandfather's story. I want to share these steps as they unfold. I'm trusting in my ancestors to guide me. In the opportunities gifted to signpost me. For the blessings of my family to invite me. This is the only way I know how, only time will tell how all this unfolds.

Two promising lads: Joseph and Lindsay Croft

Brenda L Croft

Born on Victoria River Downs, circa 1925-26, to Gurindji/Mudburra/Chinese woman, Bessie, and Anglo-Australian man Joseph Croft, the first half of young Joseph Croft's life was governed by a series of federal government ordinances, federal and state. At the time of his death in 1996, Joe had spent his seven decades challenging authoritarian restrictions. Early life in government institutions, his fierce intellect took him east during the WWII, to boarding school. Graduating in 1943 as school captain and sporting champion, a commonwealth bursary supported study at Queensland University (1944-48), arguably the first of our people to attend university. Joe's working life took him cane

cutting in Queensland, surveying the Snowy Mountains Scheme; in Qld, WA and NSW; small businessman, then Department of Aboriginal Affairs in Canberra; finally, arts/cultural entrepreneur and advisor.

Joe's son, Lindsay, died in 1994 in a road accident near El Paso, Texas, while undertaking study in the US on a Harkness Fellowship. A passionate young Indigenous man, driven by a desire for social justice and equity for Indigenous peoples, Lindsay was acknowledged by key Indigenous and non-Indigenous representatives as a future leader. His contributions were already manifold and his tragic passing precipitated Joe's death less than two years later.

Joe's funeral at St Andrews' Cathedral, Sydney, was attended by hundreds from many nationalities and backgrounds. A Maori delegation spontaneously sang as his coffin was carried out to the hearse. His ashes were interred at Kalkaringi cemetery, near Wave Hill on the 30th anniversary of the Gurindji Walk Off from Wave Hill Station.

Throughout his life, Joe embodied dignity and integrity, while embodying the 'gentlest of men'. Scholarships in memory of Joseph and Lindsay for Indigenous students have been established at UTS, ANU and UQ, with 'Joe Croft Street' named in their honour in the Canberra suburb of Bonner.

Brenda L. Croft (Gurindji/Malngin/Mudburra peoples; Anglo-Australian/Chinese/German/Irish heritage) is an Associate Professor of Indigenous Art History & Curatorship, in the Centre for Art History and Art Theory, School of Art and Design, at The Australian National University.

Joyce Clague

Lucy Davies and Kate Laing

Joyce Clague (née Mercy b.1938), a woman of Yaegl—Bandjalung—Gumbainggirr heritage, was born and raised on Ulgundahi Island on the Clarence river in NSW. She was active in the Aboriginal rights movement in Sydney in the 1960s as a welfare officer at The Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs. As part of her political career, she stood as an independent for the NT Legislative Council, initiated enrol to vote campaigns for Aboriginal communities, travelled internationally for the World Council of Churches, and acted as an advisor on women's issues to the Wran NSW government. Joyce was also involved in the Yaegl Native Title claim that was determined in the community's favour in 2015. She raised four daughters with her husband Colin. Awarded an MBE in 1977, Joyce's activism as a woman in many defining human rights movements of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries makes her life story deserving of more scholarly attention.

Lucy Davies is a PhD candidate at La Trobe University. Her thesis examines how Papuans' and New Guineans' travels shaped Australia's administration of Papua and New Guinea. In 2012 she was an Australian Historical Association/National Archives of Australia postgraduate scholar and in 2014 she received a Norman McCann Summer Scholarship from the National Library of Australia. She worked as a researcher on the ARC Discovery Project 'Land and Colonial Cultures' in 2016 and at Museum Victoria on the McCoy 'Melbourne in the South Seas' project in 2017.

Dr Kate Laing received her PhD in 2017 from La Trobe University which focused on the history of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in Australia. This led to meeting and interviewing Joyce Clague about her involvement with WILPF in the 1960s and 70s. Laing received the Nancy Millis Award from La Trobe for her thesis in 2018, a Norman McCann Summer Scholarship from the NLA in 2014, and has published in peer reviewed journals.

Fiona Foley: Provocateur: Writing her life:

Louise Martin-Chew

Louise Martin-Chew is writing a biography of Fiona Foley to offer insights into her decades of artmaking. This work records the important qualities that she portrays, not only in her artwork but as a spokesperson, curator, academic and leader, and to understand the courage with which she performs these roles. The particular conditions of Foley's life compel improvisation within the biographical genre and these include Foley as a living subject, the friendship I have with her personally, and negotiation of the ethical model within which I (as a non-Aboriginal person) engage with Foley as an Aboriginal subject. The flexibility inherent in recent biographical models is used to accommodate the political and ethical difficulties that arise when a non-Indigenous writer becomes the biographer of an Aboriginal artist. For the "Biography Slam", I propose to read a section of the biography to cast light on its "bespoke" construction.

Louise Martin-Chew has written about the visual arts for twenty-five years. Since 1993 she has contributed to national newspapers, art magazines, exhibition catalogues and books. She is due to complete her PhD at the University of Queensland (Creative Writing) in October 2018, where she is examining artist biography with Fiona Foley (Aboriginal) her subject. She is author of *Linde Ivimey*, a monograph on the Sydney-based sculptor (2012), co-author of *Australian Stories: Robert Brownhall* (2012); *Judy Watson: blood language* (MUP, 2009), *Fiona Foley: Forbidden* (2009) and *The Heart of Everything: The Art and Artists of Mornington and Bentinck Islands* (2008).

All-About Rover Thomas

Suzanne Spinner

My book, *All-About Rover Thomas* is all about him but not strictly a biography; more an unraveling of cross-cultural entanglement that ranges from the Western Desert to Venice, New York and the Bahamas via Melbourne, Perth and Sydney, yet retains its centre in Turkey Creek or Warmun in the East Kimberley. A major focus is language dissonance. How do we hear what we have never heard before? What do we think we are talking about when we talk? Making yourself understood. How did he do it? The power of utterance, declamatory assertions from Rover Thomas, a man who spoke many languages—Wangakajunka, Kukatja, Luritja, some Mirriwong, some Gija, Kimberley Kriol and Aboriginal English. Standard English was his least well known tongue, but in the artworld the only one that was heard. Money talks loudly too. Lucky he could paint.

Dr Suzanne Spinner is a playwright and writer on art and material culture. She was the founding editor of *Lip*, a magazine about women in the visual arts in Melbourne in the 1970s. In the 1980s she co-created Home Cooking Theatre Company, which created original work with women as the subject. In Darwin the 1990s she founded Paradise Productions and made theatre about the Northern Territory. For the last thirty years she has been engaged with Aboriginal art. Her PhD at the University of Melbourne was about vindicating Rover Thomas, her forthcoming book is about celebrating him.

The Master from Marnpi

Alec O'Halloran

My biographical subject, Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri, was a reserved Pintupi man who became an innovative award-winning Papunya Tula artist. As we never met this is not a collaborative (author-subject) account, in contrast to the majority of Aboriginal artists' biographies. He lived through the twentieth century (1920s-90s) in Central Australia, and was subject to the precepts of his own culture (*ngurra*—place, *walytja*—family and *Tjukurrpa*—Dreaming) and the strictures of government policies through the period (segregation, assimilation and self-determination). The biography is grounded in Namarari's own account through two interviews recorded with him, in Pintupi. Numerous additional oral history interviews, together with social and art history research round out the narrative. Namarari's art career and idiosyncratic practice are revealed through original analysis of numerous artworks and detailed interviews with art advisers who worked with him across his career (1971-1998). The project was authorised by his widow and Papunya Tula Artists.

Dr Alec O'Halloran: My attraction to Western Desert Aboriginal art blossomed in the late 1990s, drawn by the lives of Pintupi artists toward Aboriginal culture and history. The

journey culminated in cross-cultural research and authorship: a doctorate on Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri's life and art (ANU, 2013) and an authorised biography for publication, *The master from Marnpi* (2018). I previously contributed Tjapaltjarri's entry for the ANU's *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (in press). The next stage in my journey is finalising Tjapaltjarri's catalogue raisonné, in cooperation with Papunya Tula Artists (Alice Springs).

Georgia Lee (Dulcie Pitt) 1921-2010

Kathryn Wells

Georgia Lee (born Dulcie Pitt, Cairns, 1921) is credited as the first Indigenous female singer (and the second female artist) to release an LP record in Australia, singing *The Blues Down Under* (1962). Lee was famed as a jazz vocalist of 'superb, distinctive quality'. In the 1930s, as one of the Harmony Sisters, Lee toured Queensland and then entertained US troops during the Second World War with the Red Cross Jazz Unit. By 1949, Georgia Lee had established herself with lengthy engagements in Melbourne and Sydney. Lee drew on traditional harmonies, Negro jazz and blues structures, and sung 'a cappella', addressing race relations. Lee collaborated with Harold Blair, Bill Onus and Doug Nicholls, starring in *Moomba—An Aboriginal Production, Out of the Dark*, Melbourne, 1951. After time in London, making the cover of NME, 1954; Lee toured Australia with Nat King Cole, 1956-57, including to the Coolbaroo Club, Perth. Lee's legacy includes her niece jazz singer Wilma Reading, and her niece Christine Anu.

Kathryn Wells grew up in Western Australia and Fiji, graduating in history from UWA and with a Master of Letters thesis completed at the ANU. Aside from her studies, Kathryn has worked for Aboriginal advocacy and arts organisations, collecting institutions including the Australian Museum, National Museum and National Library Australia, as well as Parliament House as an advisor to MPs and for Parliamentary Committees. Kathryn writes about Australian culture, history and identity, especially Australian Indigenous history and is currently a PhD candidate, School of History, ANU.