Welcome

Welcome to the Summer edition of the RNLD newsletter!

RNLD End of Year Celebration

RNLD finished off a successful 2012 with an End of Year Celebration at Animal Orchestra in Carlton. The celebration happily coincided with DRIL Co-Director Donna McLaren’s first week at our Melbourne office and Donna was able to meet some of our board members and supporters. We were also pleased that some international guests were able to join us, including Mark Turin (World Oral Literature Project) and Nicholas Ostler (Foundation for Endangered Languages), who were in Melbourne for a CRLD public conference and seminar. As an international member of RNLD’s Advisory Panel, we enjoyed finally meeting Mark in person and welcoming him to our office. It was a lovely evening and a great way to finish off such a busy year.

Michael Ewing (University of Melbourne), Christina Eira (VACL), Paul Paton (VACL) and Donna McLaren (RNLD)

DRIL’s Senior Linguist Margaret Florey with RNLD President Nick Thieberger and Advisory Panel member Mark Turin

Children at Woorabinda Primary School
DRIL training activities
Ceduna, SA

In February, Margaret Florey ran a DRIL workshop in Ceduna with Estelle Miller and Leonard Miller which focused on the structure of words and methods to elicit and record language with speakers.

Estelle writes:

For Margaret’s second visit we were fortunate to have two fluent Gugada (or Kokatha) speakers with us on the day, and Margaret was able guide us in elicitation with both of the informants. At that moment in time, we were thinking ‘what the...?’ as we were a bit scared of taking on our new roles as ‘community language workers’.

Margaret broke down the technical terminology really well and this helped us consolidate our understanding of the linguistic discipline process. Margaret was fantastic at explaining, and as we wrote field notes and imported data into our language software, the full picture of what this work is about started to become a lot clearer to us. At first, we found it very challenging, but because Margaret is a great teacher, we were able to have some fun with the work, and now we feel a lot more confident and ready to except the challenge before us in language revival, documentation and maintenance of our community languages!
Bli Bli, Queensland

In February, Donna McLaren ran a Kabi Kabi DRIL workshop with Bianca Bond at Bli Bli and Mimburi. The three day training workshop covered pronouncing and writing sounds in Aboriginal languages, forming words in an Aboriginal language and constructing simple sentences in an Aboriginal language. Bianca also shared her skills in pronouncing and writing sounds with her mother Beverly Hand.

Woorabinda, Queensland

In February, Donna ran a DRIL workshop at Woorabinda. Cultural Officer John Waterton participated in four DRIL workshops in 2012 and is now drawing on those skills as he begins to teach Bidjara in the preschool and primary school. Donna worked with John on developing and using effective language immersion methods with children and planning literacy activities for Aboriginal languages. John, Uncle Anthony Henry and Uncle Wally Saunders also participated in a sounds and writing workshop and explored ways to use traditional songs and song methods to support language teaching.
Upcoming DRIL workshops

April 16-18 - Dhanggati language, Kempsey, New South Wales (trainers Margaret Florey and Donna McLaren)

April 29-May 1 - multiple languages, Woorabinda, Queensland (trainers Margaret Florey, Donna McLaren, Michael Jarrett and Gavan Breen)

May 14-16 - Kabi Kabi, Maroochydore, Queensland (trainer Donna McLaren)

May 21-23 - Banyjima, Yinhawangka and Nyangumarta languages, Wangka Maya Language Centre, Port Hedland, Western Australia (trainers Margaret Florey, Donna McLaren and Michael Jarrett)

June 4-6 - Gamilaraay language, Boggabilla/Toomelah, New South Wales (trainers Donna McLaren and Margaret Florey)

June 12-13 - Dhanggati language, Kempsey, New South Wales (trainer Donna McLaren)

June 24-26 - Gundjeihmi language, Jabiru, Northern Territory (trainers Donna McLaren and Margaret Florey)

June 28-30 - Mak Mak Marranunggu and Marithiel languages, Wagait, Northern Territory (trainers Donna McLaren and Margaret Florey)

Miromaa training day

On 23 January, Daryn McKenny came to the RNLD office to provide training in Miromaa to RNLD staff and also to show us some new features that are being developed. Miromaa is database software developed to aid language preservation and reclamation. Miromaa’s software allows users to easily make a dictionary which can include pictures as well as audio and video files. There are currently over 180 users of Miromaa in Australia, North America and Canada.
Conferences

International Conference on Language Documentation & Conservation - Hawaii

The third International Conference on Language Documentation and Conservation was held in Hawai‘i from February 28 - March 3 on the theme of ‘Sharing Worlds of Knowledge’. This conference featured around 135 presentations on over 100 languages from around the world.

Australia’s Aboriginal languages were well represented by both community and academic presenters. RNLD’s Margaret Florey co-presented with Knut Olawsky (MDWg) on ‘Developing a Master-Apprentice network in Australia’. Paul Paton and Christina Eira held a poster session on VACL’s Peetyawan Weeyn community-oriented planning guide for language revitalisation. Daryn McKenny co-presented in a session on the Miromaa Aboriginal Language and Technology Centre. Two papers were given by staff and students from the Master of Indigenous Languages Education (Sydney University), and Jaky Troy and Suzanne Bradshaw discussed the National Curriculum Framework for Australian Indigenous languages.

Amongst other highlights from around the world, Margaret particularly enjoyed hearing Chris Cannon’s presentation on Documenting Alaska’s indigenous astronomy, Chun Huang and colleagues talk about Heritage linguistics and language activism: A conversation with the Siraya, and Aung Si’s discussion of Solega honeybee knowledge.

Australian Languages Workshop - North Stradbroke Island

DRIL Co-Director Donna McLaren attended the 12th Australian Languages Workshop at North Stradbroke Island, Queensland in March. She gave a presentation at the workshop which provided an overview of RNLD and of the training that we provide.

The presentation was well received and many people expressed their support for RNLD’s work. The conference brought together a variety of people working in the field of Aboriginal languages across Australia and provided a good opportunity to share and learn more about language work.
RNLD Visitors

RNLD hosted Mark Turin, Nicholas Ostler, Jane Simpson (ANU) and David Nash (ANU) for morning tea in December. RNLD’s activities were discussed and we got some great suggestions about strategies to develop in the coming year. Our Education Officer Alison Soutar also gave a demonstration of RNLD’s online Resource Room.

RNLD Giving Back

Alison and Flick recently collected entry donations for Melbourne Citymission at the Queen Victoria Night Markets. Despite it being a rainy night there was a great turnout and the donation tins were getting heavy by the end of the night. RNLD’s next event with the Citymission will be the Sleep at the ‘G on Thursday 18 April.

RNLD Staff

This month RNLD farewelled our bookkeeper Robert Trsan who has started a full-time job in Richmond. We thank Rob for all his work with us and wish him all the best in his new position.

We’re pleased to welcome Michael Chen who has joined RNLD as our Office and Accounts Manager. Michael will be working every day from 10-3. He is also currently studying towards a Master of Commerce (Professional Accounting) at the University of New England.

With Michael’s appointment, we are reorganising some of the tasks that our office staff have been doing. Michael will be taking over travel planning from Alison, which will allow Alison to focus on her core role as our Education Officer. Felicity is handing her admin tasks over to Michael and she is now our Outreach Officer. In this role, Felicity will focus on social media, our newsletter, and the RNLD website as well as some resource development.

Office and Accounts Manager Michael Chen at his new desk
Committee focus - Jeanie Bell

Jeanie Bell is RNLD’s vice-president. She is a language custodian, long time community linguist, language activist and educator who has lived and worked in Queensland, Victoria and the Northern Territory.

How did you first become involved with language work?
I became involved with language work a long time ago because I had been influenced by one of my grandfathers who spoke a lot of languages in South East Queensland. I was always keen to learn more about Aboriginal languages so when I went to university in the seventies I signed up to do linguistics. I knew there were some lecturers in the department who had worked on Aboriginal languages. They were inspirational even if I was resentful that they knew more about Aboriginal languages than we did.

What work are you currently doing?
I’m currently part of an ARC project at the Australian National University, and I’m a PhD student doing a project about kinship, skin names and marriage rules. I’m focused on two tribal groups in South East Queensland that I am associated with and am working with historical material around kinship and marriage rules. I’m also doing a little work around the Northern Territory where I currently live.

Upcoming events

26-27 April - Workshop on American Indigenous Languages, University of California, Santa Barbara, USA

2-4 June - 20th Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposium, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, Arizona, USA

13 June - Minority Languages in a Multilingual Europe, University of Groningen, Groningen, Netherlands

Participate

If you or your organisation would like to join RNLD’s training program please contact us.
Join our email discussion list to ask questions and share information and your expertise.
Join our Facebook group for recent articles and links to sites supporting endangered languages.
Follow us on Twitter for news items, conference calls, updates on our activities and an online dialogue.

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