

## Ara Irititja

### Newsletter - December 2010

The Ara Irititja Project is now in its 17<sup>th</sup> year and we thank Pitjantjatjara Council, Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY), the South Australian Government and SA Museum, and our many friends and contributors for their strong support over those years. Anangu communities and schools in Western Australia, Northern Territory and South Australia are continuing to make good use of Ara Irititja and many people are enjoying it.

#### Minyma tjuta trip to Canberra

On 30 August 2009 Sally Scales, Josephine Mick, Julia Burke and Douglas Mann presented a paper at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Conference 2009, *Perspectives on urban life: connections and reconnections* in the session: *Reconnecting urban and remote communities via new technologies*. During free time from the conference they introduced themselves to some of the cultural institutions in the hope of organizing a larger Pitjantjatjara / Yankunytjatjara women's visit the following year, in particular following the success of the Pitjantjatjara / Yankunytjatjara men's visit in June 2007.

After some months of negotiations by Sally Scales, Josephine Mick and Julia Burke, such a trip was arranged with the following participants:

1. Josephine Mick, Pitjantjatjara cultural adviser & trip facilitator
2. Paniny Mick, Pitjantjatjara cultural adviser
3. Iluwanti Ken, Pitjantjatjara cultural adviser
4. Imuna Fraser, Pitjantjatjara cultural adviser (was unable to attend)
5. Sally Anga Scales, interpreter/Pitjantjatjara girl (20 years)
6. Julia Burke, Ara Irititja project officer

AIATSIS, National Library of Australia, National Archive, National Film and Sound Archives and National Museum shared the costs. Total costs included fees for the women, return travel and accommodation from the APY Lands to Alice Springs and Canberra, vehicle hire and other expenses. This amounted to almost \$23,000 and was funded entirely by the institutions. It would not have been possible to carry out such a trip within the Ara Irititja Project's own budget.

The group of women stayed in Canberra from Monday May 31 until Friday June 4 and spent every day accessing collections in the institutions. They viewed photos, documents and movies and listened to sound tapes. During the meetings they also discussed access protocols with the institutions. They assessed items and advised on women's only sensitive material and requested copies of thousands of items ('open' as well as 'sensitive') for inclusion in the Ara Irititja database.

A significant outcome of the 2009 conference and this visit by Pitjantjatjara women was the subsequent invitation for Sally Scales to present the Keynote Address at the ITIC Symposium in Canberra in July 2010. Sally was the Symposium's first speaker, demonstrating Ara Irititja to an

audience that included representatives from a large number of Australian communities and organisations, as well as from France, North America, New Zealand and the Philippines.



Sally and Josephine at AIATSIS, Canberra, 2 June 2010



The Ara Irititja team with staff at National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra, 4 June 2010

## Conferences

As organisations and communities around Australia hear about our new 'Indigenous Knowledge Management' database software, we are receiving more and more enquiries for information. This has resulted in several invitations to present our program to conferences and seminars. Our project is unable to fund the travel and accommodation costs involved, so we were only able to attend with the support of the conference organisers. In 2010 we participated in the following:

Canberra: 13-15 July - Information Technologies and Indigenous Communities – Symposium at AIATSIS. Aṛa Irititja was invited to make two presentations in this national conference. On the first day, Sally Scales gave the 45-minute Keynote Address on the community use of Aṛa Irititja. It was an impressive achievement for a 20-year-old Pitjantjatjara girl. On the second day John Dallwitz and Douglas Mann with Sally and the Aṛa Irititja team gave a demonstration of the advanced functions of the new software. These presentations can be viewed at the video links <http://vimeo.com/14409955> and <http://vimeo.com/14226592>

Maynooth, Ireland: 24 August - Indigenizing digital technologies, imagining cultural futures: Aṛa Irititja reshapes new media in contemporary Australia – European Association of Social Anthropologists 11<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference, Ireland. Sabra Thorner presented a demonstration of the new Aṛa Irititja software to this international audience.

Alice Springs: 7 September – *Recovering lost cultural and land connections and promoting them into the future* – Workshop at Desert Knowledge Australia. John Dallwitz presented Aṛa Irititja.

Thursday Island: 13 October – *Aṛa Irititja* - 12<sup>th</sup> National Indigenous Remote Media Festival, hosted by Torres Strait Islanders Media Association. John Dallwitz gave the Keynote presentation. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/irca/with/5134643189/>

Adelaide: 18 November – *Talkin across country, talkin across the world: Indigenous knowledge in an online world* – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library and Information Network Service (ATSILIRN) 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. John Dallwitz and Douglas Mann presented the new Aṛa Irititja software.

New Orleans, USA: 20 November – *Imagining the Indigital: Aṛa Irititja Indigenizes the Technologies of Knowledge Management* – American Anthropological Association 109<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting. Sabra Thorner presented a demonstration of the new software to this prestigious meeting at a session entitled *Indigenous Knowledge and New Media at the Interface*.

## South Australian Museum and project funding

It is pleasing to report that the four-year funding from the SA Government, through the SA Museum, has now been approved as an ongoing annual financial support. This is a very significant development in the long-term sustainability of the project. However the approved amount falls far short of the annual needs of Aṛa Irititja and it is imperative that further sources of funding are identified.

We no longer receive funding through any of the Australian Government's ICC Indigenous arts, culture and language programs. so the project still needs the help of our regular contributors, such as the schools, communities and APY.

We have continued to successfully sell the Aṛa Irititja software. It is now being used in more than 30 non-Aṅangu communities in WA, NT, SA, NSW, Victoria and Queensland. Many other people want to use the software and we anticipate selling more software licences next year. They do not buy any Aṅangu photos or archive materials, only the computer software program.

As a result of our team demonstrations at conferences, as well as good will and word-of-mouth, there have been some strong expressions of interest for us to advise and supply software to Indigenous projects overseas. We hope that this might become an extra source of income for the project in the future.

### Community workstations

Since our last report, there have been more Aṛa Irititja computer workstations established. There are now more than 60 Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara and Ngaanyatjarra Aṛa Irititja computers in many places where they can be seen and worked on by Aṅangu:

NT - Alice Springs, Docker River, Imanpa, Aputula, Mutitjulu, Utju and Titjikala

WA – Irrunytju, Coonana, Tjuntjuntjara, Cosmo Newberry, Warburton, Mantamaru, Papulankutja, Wannan and Warakurna

SA - Kalka, Pipalyatjara, Watarru, Murputja, Amata, Pukatja, Kenmore Park, Fregon, Mimili, Indulkana, Yalata, Oak Valley and Coober Pedy

In Adelaide, Aṛa Irititja computers are at Better World Arts, Wiltja Hostel, AṅTEP, Aṅangu Education office and at Woodville High School for Aṅangu secondary students. At Port Augusta, Port Lincoln and Mobilong Prisons there are also computers with Aṛa Winki and Aṛa Irititja.

There are now approximately 100,000 photos, movies and audio files in the Aṛa Irititja computer. The Aṛa Irititja team makes visits each year to communities and schools to upgrade their computers. This also includes visits to Umoona Aged Care at Coober Pedy and to computers in Adelaide and Alice Springs. The project team regularly attends conferences and meetings, including Tjilpi Pampa Tjuṭaku Festival and men's and women's Law meetings.

Aṛa Irititja is also working on the separate 'Minymaku' and 'Watiku' computers. Julia Burke and Linda Rive have expanded the work with NPY Women's Council on the Minymaku computer and Ian Baird has been working with men on the Watiku computer. Unfortunately our grants from ICC have stopped and no funds at all have been achieved for the Minymaku and Watiku databases for more than four years.

With all of the computers that are now on the Lands there is a great deal of work required to keep them going and to give software support. We also want to continue training Aṅangu and to employ Aṅangu to help with the community computers and to record stories. This will be especially important as we introduce communities to the new software next year.

### Ernabella Church celebrations

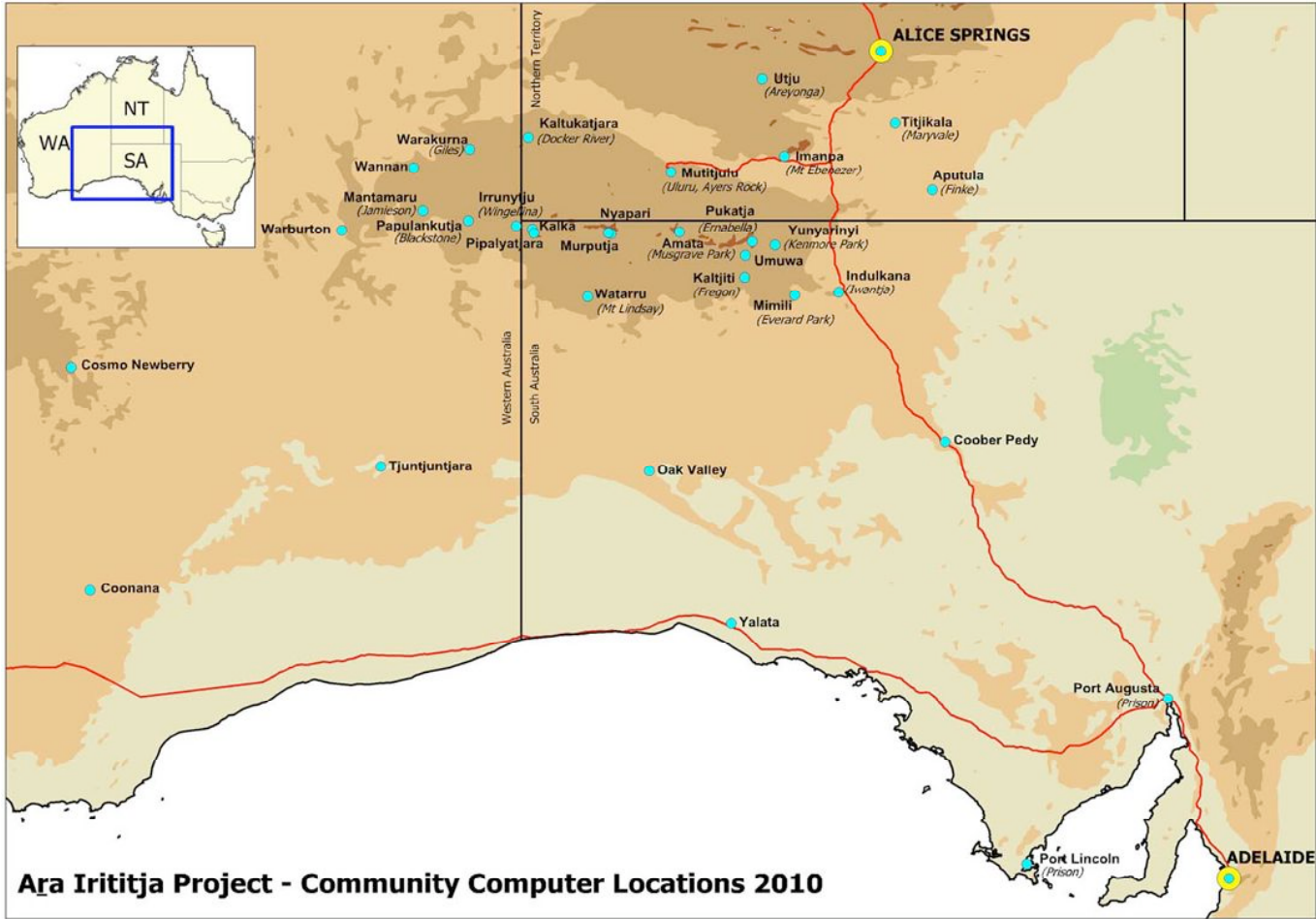
Aṛa Irititja prepared two large historical photo displays about the history of the Ernabella Church. Bill Edwards helped with the captions and other historical information and funding was provided by the Uniting Church in Alice Springs.

The Aṛa Irititja team transported it to Pukatja and installed it in the church for the re-opening celebrations in March 2010.

An addition to the display is being prepared to include photos of the renovation work and the re-opening celebrations. Bill Edwards is also researching and writing a history of the church.



The historical photo display at the Ernabella Church celebrations, Pukatja, March 2010



## Rolling out the new Ara Irititja software

We are progressing well with testing our new browser-based software program. We have brought all of the old Ara Irititja material into the new program and have just started testing and working in our private network. Simultaneously, the Northern Territory Library is also testing our software, and preparing to roll it out into its acclaimed *Our Stories / LKC* program. NTL has been a major contributor of funds to enable the Pitjantjatjara Council to develop the new software.

In early 2011 we anticipate the first roll out of the revised software, which will include many new community-friendly features. It will also include many thousands of photos as well as hundreds of hours of movies and sounds that have never previously been seen through Ara Irititja. Over this year we have addressed a large backlog of movies and have re-formatted our whole collection, in readiness for the new software.

At the moment there is no funding to help with this changeover and some of the old computers across the Lands will need to be replaced or upgraded.

Over the years we have liaised closely with Ngaanyatjarra people and organisations. This year, there are now nine Ara Irititja workstations being supported by Ngaanyatjarra Media in Western Australian communities. Ngaanyatjarra Council Land and Culture have committed to join the project and will work with the new software in their land management program next year. The new software will enable all Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara and Ngaanyatjarra speakers to access interface features and record stories in their own languages. We would also like to work more with APY anthropologists and land management officers to add photos, movies and stories into Ara Irititja.

We continue to work closely with other Anangu organisations. We have a close collaboration with the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council. Ara Irititja participated in the annual Tjilpi Pampa Festival and Women's Law and Culture Meeting that were funded and organised by the Women's Council this year. Ara Irititja also provides research and images for the NPYWC ongoing publications program. In 2010 this included the Tjanpi Desert Weavers book currently in production.

We trust that all Anangu are pleased with the way Ara Irititja is going. The project team is proud to help look after this history.

John Dallwitz  
Coordinator Ara Irititja Project