Happy International Year of Indigenous Languages! 2019 promises to be a massive and exciting year, for RNLD, those in our extended network, and Indigenous peoples and their allies around the world.

Languages play an integral role in the day-to-day lives of people worldwide, not just in communication, but also as a repository for each person’s unique identity, culture, history, traditions and memories.

Of the world’s 6000 to 7000 languages, the overwhelming majority are spoken by a small portion of the world’s population, and are at high risk of disappearing. Indigenous languages, including many in Australia, account for most of those at risk.

Across the continent, the number of Australian languages spoken by Indigenous people has declined significantly. At present, Australian language scenarios are diverse: from sleeping languages that communities are working hard to wake up, to languages that are still spoken by children but are critically endangered by English education systems and other pressures.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples asserts that, around the world, Indigenous people have the right to revitalise, use and transmit their languages. The declaration also respects and acknowledges the principle of self-determination.

At RNLD, we take these two concepts very seriously. We want to support communities to manage and make decisions about their own language and language work, and to access the training they need to do that. We’re excited to use this newsletter to tell our supporters about some new projects we are undertaking this year for the International Year of Indigenous Languages.
A message from our CEO

The United Nations declared 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages not only to raise awareness of the importance of language to cultural diversity but also to raise awareness of the role of language in supporting the health and wellbeing of communities and supporting reconciliation more broadly.

For RNLD the International Year of Indigenous Languages promises to be an exciting year full of new challenges. We look forward to supporting the objectives of the UN and raising awareness where we can through the many language projects we are involved in. You can read more about a number of these projects in this latest newsletter.

On another exciting note, 2019 is the year RNLD will look toward launching a new name for the organisation and developing a strategy to see how best to communicate into the future. So if you have any feedback you’d like to share regarding our website, social media, newsletter or communication generally please let us know. We always appreciate feedback.

Finally, on behalf of RNLD, a safe, productive and prosperous new year to all.
Hello from our Training Director

Emma Murphy
DRIL Training Director

We have several exciting new projects planned for this year, the International Year of Indigenous Languages! Andrew and I kicked off the year with the first of these – check out Andrew’s article about our inspiring few days in Fremantle with talented musicians and language teachers.

If you follow RNLD’s work, you are probably aware of our successful professional development program in the past. This year, we begin a new PD program focusing on young and emerging language workers and teachers. RNLD has partnered with First Languages Australia’s Young Champions program to offer training in linguistics and language learning and teaching to the next generation of language workers.

In May, we will welcome the first cohort of 10-12 participants to our office in Melbourne – we’re very much looking forward to meeting and working with the first group! We’re also excited that this workshop will be largely run by Aboriginal people, including graduates from the Masters of Indigenous Languages Education (MILE) program, and hopefully one or two previous PD participants. This program is being led by our fabulous trainer Ebony Joachim, who went through our first full PD program.

Later in the year, RNLD trainers and language warriors from Queensland, New South Wales, ACT and Victoria will gather for two big weeks in Canberra, for our exciting Paper & Talk workshop. RNLD has partnered with AIATSIS to give around 12 people from five language groups the opportunity to spend time in the archives, discovering what materials relevant to their languages are held there, learning research, linguistic and project skills to then take their new knowledge and resources back to their communities. This workshop will be modelled on the well-loved Breath of Life Institute in the US, which itself was inspired by the first Paper & Talk workshop at AIATSIS in 1994, run by RNLD co-founder Nick Thieberger.
Then, towards the end of this big year, we will be launching the template Learner’s Guide we are developing (and featured in the previous newsletter). We are looking forward to getting together with our reference group members again in April to refine the chapters of this resource, brainstorm the few remaining chapters (we’ve left some exciting and rather daunting bits till last!) and start planning the celebration for when the project is finished and we can share what we hope will be a very useful tool with all of you.

As we gear up for the year ahead, I must take a moment to thank and recognise the incredible trainers I work with – Ebony, Amy and Andrew – who are graciously and capably stepping up to lead and guide these new projects, with all the extra responsibility and learning, travel and sacrificing of personal time that entails. Thank you for the vision, commitment and energy. And also to our office-based staff and volunteer team who work around, and tolerate, our schedules, support us in too many ways to name, and keep us all on track, on time, and in good spirits.

As this impressive list of upcoming events no doubt suggests, RNLD is so much bigger and stronger than the sum of our staff: our 2019 projects will succeed and thrive because of our amazing, talented and generous board members, volunteers, extended Learner’s Guide project group, colleagues and friends at AIATSIS, First Languages Australia and language centres around the country. And, indeed, our network of previous staff and participants, who we are thrilled to have join us as occasional trainers (and about whom I’m sure you’ll hear more this year).

Happy International Year of Indigenous Languages, everyone! May the languages and their peoples be heard, loud and proud.

Support RNLD’s work!

In honour of the United Nations International Year of Indigenous Languages, RNLD will be holding a Raffle Fundraiser this year. You could win a basket packed full of goodies collected from RNLD workshop sites across Australia, gift cards from local businesses in Melbourne, and other tasteful treats and prizes. Funds raised from the raffle tickets will help us continue to improve our output, and further expand the work we do. With your help, we can reach more participants and provide training that is tailored to specific communities and cultural contexts.

Stay tuned for the official release of our raffle in a few weeks’ time!

A taster photo of some of the items you can expect to find in the raffle
At the end of January, DRIL trainers Andrew and Emma facilitated an incredible and inspiring two-day sharing workshop with language teachers, musicians and music educators from across WA. Thanks to everyone who came to Fremantle for what was a new approach for RNLD: rather than delivering training, we provided a space for this talented bunch of people to network, share ideas about bringing music and language teaching together, and showcasing the incredible work they are all doing.
At the very last hour, a song was written - in Yawuru, Walmajarri, Wajarri and Noongar - which we hope spreads to other languages. Thanks to the Wyemando Foundation for funding this fabulous two day experiment.
Amy and Emma spent four huge, inspiring and language-packed days training on Groote Eylandt over 11-14 February.

We spent two days at Umbakumba exploring meaning in Anindilyakwa colours and body-part metaphors, learning about the different language scenarios around Australia and what people are doing to keep their languages strong, and working through the National Indigenous Languages Survey.
Then we had two days at Angurugu doing some Anindilyakwa grammar before creating some fun new worksheets and games to help kids learn to read and write the language. It was a massive week, especially for those who came to Umbakumba AND Angurugu - we covered a lot of ground and learnt heaps!
In December Andrew travelled to Adelaide to attend the 2018 Australian Linguistics Society (ALS) conference at the University of South Australia. Apart from the usual packed program of presentations and talks, Andrew represented RNLD at a workshop on Indigenous Languages Training and Career Paths, chaired by Dr Rob Amery and Dr Mary-Anne Gale. Andrew presented an overview of RNLD’s training programs, and a discussion of the current challenges as well as exciting developments in the sector.

It was great to hear from so many experienced and talented Aboriginal Language educators, and to see all the different training options available for language teachers. An important outcome of this workshop was that a motion was later carried at the ALS Annual General Meeting that the ALS will request that relevant bodies officially recognise teachers of Aboriginal languages.

While Andrew was in Adelaide, he also caught up with local Adnyamathanha and Kuyani language activist and youth worker and longtime friend of RNLD, Salote Bovoro. Salote showed Andrew a range of beautiful new Adnyamathanha story books that have just been published, and then they worked together on analysing some tricky Kuyani pronoun forms.
Trivia night

Carlton 18 December 2018

We were incredibly lucky once again to have Katie and Rosey from University of Melbourne host another hugely successful Trivia Night on 18th December. It was a wonderful night of fun and frivolity, and together we raised just under $600 which will go towards supporting participants attend the “Paper & Talk” workshop we are running with AIATSIS later this year. We’re so grateful to Katie and Rosey for organising and running the entire event, and to everyone who came and made the night what it was – thank you! Thanks also to CoEDL and PARADISEC for donating some great prizes, and to the Clyde Hotel for providing the venue.

If you couldn’t make it on the night, but would still like to support our workshop participants, please email accounts@rnld.org to donate.

Staff news

Farewell Anastasia!

This year we say goodbye to one of our wonderful volunteers, Anastasia, who began volunteering with us in July 2018. Anastasia contributed her time and skills to various projects during her time at RNLD, including our resource and information sharing activities with our local and international membership, Language in the News and Music Monday social media posts, fundraising planning and brainstorming, workshop database administration, and resource creation support.

A big thank you Anastasia for your commitment, time, diligence, ideas and enthusiasm while here at RNLD. We wish you all the very best in your new adventures this year and beyond!
National Indigenous Languages Report – Survey of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages

AIATSIS would like to remind everyone that the National Indigenous Languages Report (NILR) – Survey of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages is currently ongoing through to March 2019.

The survey will help us answer the question:

What is the current state of Indigenous Languages in Australia?

We are asking for information on each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language, such as the health and strength of the language, whether it is being passed on to young people, how and when it’s used, and what resources exist. We are hoping to ask these questions about as many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages as possible.

This survey can be completed online at:


If you have any questions, please contact the AIATSIS NILR team at the following address:

nilr@aiatsis.gov.au

or

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AIATSIS, GPO Box 553
Canberra ACT 2601
51 Lawson Crescent
02 6246 1111
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In Detail...

Every three months, we want to provide a brief description of one of our units of teaching. **Make words and sentences in Aboriginal languages** is the unit we are going to talk about in this edition of our newsletter.

Linguistics is the study of languages and their structure. In linguistics, our unit called **Make words and sentences in Aboriginal languages** falls under the area of morphology. In this unit we look at how linguists analyse words. We look at how words can be formed, different parts of words, the relationships words have with each other and how they are put together in a sentence.

Once we look at ways linguists study words and the structure of sentences, we then give time to participants to analyse their own languages and/or collate all the information they find or know themselves about their language.

Upcoming Workshops

Over the next 3 months you will find us in:

- March 6-8 — **Flexible DRIL**: Port Augusta, SA
- March 26-28 — **Flexible DRIL**: Barunga, NT
- April 8-10 — **Learner’s Guide Reference Group**: Carlton, VIC
- April 29-May 1 — **Flexible DRIL**: Kununurra, WA
- May 8-10 — **Flexible DRIL**: Parnngurr, WA
- May 27-31 — **Youth Professional Development**: Carlton, VIC

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