Welcome to the latest newsletter from the Research Unit for Indigenous Language.

RUIL consists of a team of researchers from the School of Languages and Linguistics, led by **Associate Professor Rachel Nordlinger** and **Professor Gillian Wigglesworth**.

This newsletter presents some of the highlights of the last four months, and focuses particularly on events, fieldwork, new and continuing projects, and new grants.

For a full list of all publications, conference presentations and current grants, please visit our website: http://arts.unimelb.edu.au/indiglang

### Jenny and David Manmurulu from Warruwi Community visit Melbourne

Jenny and David Manmurulu from Warruwi Community in Arnhem Land presented three papers at the Information Technology and Indigenous Communities conference (ITIC), 27-28th September 2017, Melbourne. They were recipients of a RUIL Indigenous Researcher Grant. These small grants are available to Indigenous researchers who engage in language research projects with team members from the Research Unit for Indigenous Language, and are created to support the work and/or professional development of an Indigenous researcher.

Jenny Manmurulu is the senior Indigenous teacher at Warruwi School and David Manmurulu is a custodian of the Inyjalarrku song-set. These hard-working ceremony leaders take every opportunity to promote and maintain their community’s songs, dances and languages for the next generation. Over the past decade, this has included working with researchers. At ITIC they presented the paper *Maintaining song and language at Warruwi: the role of legacy & contemporary recordings* together with musicologist/linguist Isabel O’Keeffe (The University of Sydney), musicologist Reuben Brown (Victorian College of the Arts) and Ruth Singer (RUIL). Jenny also presented on the *Mawng Ngaralk* website which makes accessible resources on Warruwi languages and culture. Check out the people page of that website for some great interviews with Jenny and David. Finally, Jenny presented on the Mawng *Karulum* bird app and its relevance for Mawng language maintenance (read more about the bird app project here: http://arts.unimelb.edu.au/indiglang/ruil-in-action/community-projects#getting-in-touch). Outside of the conference, Jenny and David worked with Reuben and Isabel to prepare papers that were subsequently presented by Isabel at the Foundation for Endangered languages conference (Portugal) and by Reuben at the Society of Ethnomusicology conference (USA). They also enjoyed seeing the *kurrula* (sea) down south at the beach.
Research Unit for Indigenous Language Newsletter, 2017(3)

Introducing RUIL’s 2017 cadet, Shonae Hobson

From August onward, RUIL has hosted a cadet through the Faculty of Arts Indigenous Cadetship program. This program is geared toward assisting cadets to develop skills related to academic employment, during a transitional stage in their learning and career progression. For six months in 2017, the RUIL team has been joined by Shonae Hobson, who has made an invaluable contribution to the outreach activities of the unit.

Shonae is a Kaantju woman from Coen, Cape York Peninsula. She is currently undertaking a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Anthropology and Art History. She is interested in incorporating what she is learning about Indigenous languages into her broader goal of becoming a curator. Part of her role at RUIL has been to assist Brighde with the RUIL social media posts. This has involved sourcing several Aboriginal language dictionaries and finding specific words and images to post on our Twitter and Facebook page. She is also conducting an analysis of our social media activities, and has assisted with various writing tasks, as well as participating in fun activities like video production (and attending meetings!)

Her broader interest in linguistics stems from her role within her community back home, ‘For me language is such an important cultural foundation. I come from a community made up of six distinct language groups, with the number of fluent speakers slowly declining. I chose the Linguistics Cadetship program with RUIL because I wanted to learn more about language revitalization practices and methods to help restore languages. Since working at RUIL I have learnt a great deal about linguistics, and have gained valuable skills that I’m sure will be of great use to me later down the track.’

2018 Australian Languages Workshop

RUIL is hosting the 17th annual Australian Languages Workshop again this year, in beautiful Marysville, Victoria. Registrations are now open, and close on February 8th. Further information can be found at http://arts.unimelb.edu.au/indiglang/ruil-in-action/ALW2018.

RUIL studentship recipient: Maria Karidakis

RUIL PhD student Maria Karidakis received a 2017 RUIL studentship to support her fieldwork activities. She visited the Kimberley Interpreting Services (KIS) in Broome in mid-July, to collect data for her research projectDue to space restrictions, please refer to the PDF for the full text.

Maria met with interpreters in Broome and Fitzroy Crossing through the Kimberley Interpreting Services. The KIS has over 100 accredited interpreters that work throughout the Kimberley, who cater for more than 18 Kimberley and Central Desert languages. For many Aboriginal people in this area, English is their fourth or fifth language; the majority of young people grow up speaking Kriol and only learn English at school. Older people tend to speak traditional language(s) as well as Kriol. This highlights the need to use professional interpreters rather than family members, who may not have the English proficiency adequate to sufficiently translate complex medical terms. One of the challenges the interpreters identified is the importance of making provision for cultural differences, including male–female business and the need to determine kinship relationships between interlocutors when taking on an assignment. The interpreters also discussed having to ‘unpack’ medical terminology and explain it in tangible terms to ensure patient understanding. This aids in reducing the sense of fear that may be present alongside a deficiency in English language skills, particularly among elderly Indigenous Australians in rural and remote communities. Other key strategies used include talking about sensitive topics using culturally appropriate terminology; avoiding certain question formats that could cause confusion and being aware of non-verbal aspects of communication which have the potential to impact the interaction (such as intonation or body language). Maria’s ongoing study will tap into under-researched issues at the intersection of culture, language and health.
RUIL in Vanuatu

From July to September this year, RUIL team member Rosey Billington and RUIL PhD student Ana Krajnovic visited Erakor village on the island of Efate in Vanuatu. Here they spent time learning about the Nafsan language with community members. Ana’s PhD research focuses on how people talk about time in Nafsan, and to find out more about this, she worked with many different people to record Nafsan translations of illustrated stories and discuss the way people describe when and how things happened. These stories are also being translated and recorded for other Melanesian languages as part of a joint project with the Humboldt University of Berlin, and the collection of stories will lead to a database which will develop a better understanding of the patterns across languages. Rosey is currently working on a project on the phonetic and phonological patterns of Nafsan, together with RUIL team members Janet Fletcher and Nick Thieberger. She made many recordings which will allow for detailed analyses of Nafsan speech sounds, and shed light on some of the complexities Nafsan shows compared to closely related languages. Ana and Rosey were also treated to lessons in how to make traditional Vanuatu dishes such as lap-lap and tuluk, how to weave baskets, and how to make roof thatch from sago palm, and made videos of these processes to share with the community. Two community members, Lionel Emil and Gray Kaltapau, learned how to make their own recordings and transcribe them on the computer, and plan to continue recording Nafsan stories and cultural knowledge.

CONGRATULATIONS!

2017 has been a wonderful year for RUIL team members overall, and we want to take the opportunity to thank everyone for the hard work that they have put in to make the Research Unit for Indigenous Language such a great success. We have some specific achievements which we want to share with everybody! Firstly, congratulations to John Mansfield for his Australian Research Council Discovery Early Career Research Award (project title: Aboriginal language evolution in urban contexts); and to Brett Baker, Janet Fletcher and Rikke Bundgaard Nielsen for their Australian Research Council Discovery Project (project asks: Are super-complex words represented like sentences in speakers’ minds?). Congratulations also to our Director Rachel Nordlinger, who has been elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities (joining RUIL team member Janet Fletcher).

RUIL Public Lecture: Our Languages Matter, Kulinin? Reimagining remote education through Red Dirt Thinking

The second RUIL Public Lecture for 2017 was held in early November. Delivered by Dr Sam Osborne and Ms Karina Lester, the lecture explored the principles behind Red Dirt Thinking, a novel approach to educational methodologies which takes into account the unique cultural perspective that exists in remote communities. This lecture was filmed and will be available online by mid-December. To view this and some of our other Public Lectures, visit http://arts.unimelb.edu.au/indiglang/ruil-in-action/public-lectures/
RUIL co-hosts ‘Language and Wellbeing’ meeting with First Languages Australia

In August we were honoured to co-host a meeting held to facilitate early discussions based around language and wellbeing, in conjunction with First Languages Australia (and in collaboration with the ARC Centre of Excellence for the Dynamics of Language). Language workers have long identified the important relationship between language activities and community wellbeing. This inaugural meeting brought together people from around Australia to explore collaborative ways of documenting evidence of the positive associations between Indigenous language activities and wellbeing. Participants’ research and experience span areas including language work, epidemiology, neuroscience, project management, community engagement and capacity building. We were proud to support the first step in such an important process, and look forward to updating you as the project continues! Read more about the meeting and First Languages Australia here: http://go.unimelb.edu.au/7526.

Strengthening language, strengthening community: showcasing Mildura’s Aboriginal languages

A team from RUIL are the grateful recipients of two grants allowing them to carry out a new community project in 2018. Strengthening language, strengthening community: showcasing Mildura’s Aboriginal languages will be funded predominantly by the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust, with additional funding from the Melbourne Humanities Fund. The team, comprising of RUIL Project Officer Brighde Collins, RUIL team member Debbie Loakes and RUIL Director Rachel Nordlinger, will begin work on the project in March next year. Strengthening language, strengthening community will empower Mildura’s Indigenous community to reconnect with their traditional languages and share this knowledge with the broader Mildura community, resulting in increased respect, social inclusion and community engagement. Beginning with a series of community-based workshops, the project will culminate in a language focused exhibition in Mildura. Stay tuned for future updates!

RUIL at PULIIMA 2017

In October this year RUIL team member Hywel Stoakes attended the PULIIMA National Indigenous Language and Technology Forum in Cairns. Hywel delivered two workshops on “creating optimal recordings”, with around 30 people in each class. The workshop was geared toward people with limited experience in creating recordings, and provided them with a chance to learn more about their own recording equipment and troubleshoot. Hywel focused on how to make recordings which were of a quality high enough to be archived, and so focused on filenaming techniques, how to control the quality of the recording by the settings on the recorder, and how to best position microphones. Other workshops focused mainly on language documentation for use in a language revitalisation or revival situation. From these, Hywel says “a highlight for me was an immersive language lesson on Hawaiian which culminated in a lesson on hula” (pictured). Thanks to all the PULIIMA participants who came along to the workshop, and we look forward to seeing you all at PULIIMA in 2019!

Season’s Greetings from everyone at RUIL!

We hope you have a happy and healthy festive season, and look forward to sharing more exciting Indigenous language stories with you in 2018!

4 Research Unit for Indigenous Language Research Newsletter, 2017(3)