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://indiglang.arts.unimelb.edu.au

FIELDWORK REPORT: YIPIRINYA SCHOOL, ALICE SPRINGS

RUIL team member Gillian Wigglesworth, and one of our PhD students Carly Steele visited Alice Springs at the end of May. They were there to trial different data collection methods for a project currently under consideration for funding with the Australian Research Council. They are working with Rhonda Oliver (Curtin University) and Robyn Ober (Bachelor Institute for Indigenous Tertiary Education). Their week in Alice Springs was spent working with teachers and students at Yipirinya Independent School. They spent time with teachers and children in years 1, 3 and 5 recording the teachers’ language in the classrooms, and the children’s language in both the classroom and the playground. The purpose of the visit was to determine the best type of data collection method, and to identify differences in the children’s language use in the classroom and in the playground. Recordings of all three classes were made on video with wireless audio recorders, or using audio recorders in bum-bags with lapel microphones and iPads to record the video. While both methods worked well as recording devices, with excellent sound quality, the iPads and audio recorders were found to be much easier to use, less intrusive in the classroom, and more convenient for the researcher uploading the recordings. Children, teachers and researchers all enjoyed the interaction and the data will provide useful insights into the children’s range of language use.

Robyn Ober working with one of the audio recorders (photo G Wigglesworth)

Jayziyah Holt: one of the students involved in the project (photo: G Wigglesworth)

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Community book launch at Ti Tree

A new book, *Mer Angenty-warn alhem: Travelling to Angenty waterhole* (Batchelor Press), was launched at Ti Tree on the 18 May. An Anmatyerr team led by April Pengart Campbell and Clarrie Kemarr Long worked with Jenny Green from RUIL and Margaret Carew from Batchelor Institute to document songs and stories from Angenty, a sacred waterhole in Anmatyerr and Warlpiri country to the north of Alice Springs in Central Australia.

This book is centred around a family visit to Angenty in 2011. Men, women and children camped in the riverbed and elders told stories about the ancestral spirits of the country, including *Mern amar* ‘mulga apple’, *Arrkerr* ‘barn owl’, *Arnamarwengk* ‘spirit women’, *Tywerrk* ‘native fig’, and *Alharrenty* ‘the monster’. Senior women taught the young girls songs, dances and designs associated with Angenty country.

April Campbell said they made the book ‘because we are losing our important elders that belong to this country’. April is looking forward to using the book as a teaching resource in the Ti Tree school. The book includes oral histories, artworks, photos, and musical annotations and translations for Angenty songs. It is produced with sound printing, and QR codes printed in the book enable online access to several films. To read more and to purchase the book, visit http://central.batchelor.edu.au/project/mer-angenty

RNLD Professional Development Stage II group visit RUIL

On June 1st RUIL had a visit by the participants in the Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity’s fifth Documenting and Revitalising Indigenous Languages (DRIL) Professional Development workshop. This program was created to support the long-term maintenance of Australian Aboriginal languages, through increasing the professional capacity of Indigenous people working on their languages. The group visited RUIL to learn more about the tertiary study of linguistics, and to hear about the work that the RUIL team does around Australia. Brighde Collins, Brett Baker, Barb Kelly, Rebecca Defina, Lucy Davidson and Peter Nyhuis joined the group for a cup of tea and a casual question-and-answer about all things RUIL related. Thanks to the group for coming and visiting – we had fun!
Nafsan dictionary work

Nick Thieberger has been working on a dictionary of Nafsan (Efate, Vanuatu) and ran a workshop in Erakor village in May, following up from a similar workshop in September 2015. The participants are all very keen to work on extending the information in the dictionary, especially as government policy is now in favour of initial vernacular literacy in schools. The group of enthusiastic participants attended all day for four days as the team edited existing words in the 2,700 entry dictionary, and added new words and idiomatic expressions. They also worked on recording local place names. The team will produce a children's dictionary and some early word books for use in the school over the next year and are exploring the Bloom platform (http://bloomlibrary.org/) to help with book production. While in Port Vila Nick met with the director of the Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta (VKS) and returned a set of 70 tapes digitised by PARADISEC for the VKS.

Warruwi students working with Ruth Singer

This year, RUIL team member Ruth Singer is working with Warruwi high school students Audrey (year 9) and Tamia (year 7), who are attending school at St. Leonard’s College (Brighton). They are enjoying their time in Melbourne, although they both said they were really cold! Ruth met the students through her involvement with the Warruwi community, where she conducts the majority of her research on the social relationships between languages in multilingual Warruwi. The two students are no exception to the multilingual norm: both have parents who speak different languages, and they talk together in Mawng (the common language among students at school). Audrey mainly speaks Kunwinjku, and ‘a little bit of Mawng’, while Tamia speaks Mawng, ‘kind of Kunwinjku and sort of Arrernte’. Although neither of them mentioned it, they also speak pretty good English too! With Ruth, Audrey and Tamia have been working on various video projects. In first term, Ruth filmed them interviewing one another, and Audrey wrote subtitles in Elan (linguistics software). In second term, the students created their own film about Warruwi, using images from the internet and a voiceover they recorded themselves. Their next project will be filmed while the three of them are in Warruwi: the plan is to interview old people about bush medicine, and Audrey and Tamia will then edit the film themselves, and make their own subtitles. The videos from first term can be seen on the Mawng Ngaralk website: http://www.mawngngaralk.org.au/stories/mediaTheme
EVENTS UPDATE

RUIL has hosted a number of exciting events since our last newsletter. We hosted a Reconciliation Week morning tea, raising funds for Reconciliation Australia. We also put on a free public lecture by Associate Professor Nicholas Reid, entitled ‘Aboriginal memories of inundation of the Australian coast’. This lecture outlined the geographical changes to Australia’s coastline resulting from rising sea levels at the end of the last ice age and how stories of this inundation have been passed from generation to generation in traditional Indigenous narratives. By using modern geographical dating techniques, some of these stories have been dated to over 7000 years old! Watch the lecture here: https://indiglang.arts.unimelb.edu.au/resources/public-lecture-recordings/

RUIL team at WANALA conference

RUIL members Rachel Nordlinger and Nick Thieberger attended the 2016 WANALA Aboriginal Languages Conference and presented training sessions in Elan and recording techniques, as well as talking about the Daisy Bates project (http://bates.org.au) and the nature of adjectives and adverbs in Australian languages.

WANALA is the Western and Northern Aboriginal Languages Alliance, a collaborative alliance for all Aboriginal organisations, projects and activities in the region aimed at supporting, promoting, and teaching languages, and providing services such as interpreting and translation. This year’s conference was held in Kalgoorlie (Western Australia), and directed at those who work with Indigenous languages around Australia – speakers of Aboriginal languages, workers at language centres, those involved in language projects and schools running Aboriginal language courses. The conference was attended by over 100 people from not only Western Australia, but also from other parts of Australia.

As outlined on the conference website, ‘the theme of this conference relates to the critical role language plays in building personal and community resilience. Language is an expression of identity and a carrier of identity. Language is a means to express intellect and a way to develop intellect. By ensuring languages are kept strong, healthy and vibrant, Aboriginal people build resilience. Conversely, resilient communities keep language strong, healthy and vibrant. The organisers invite papers and presentations that demonstrate the ways in which language is used to build identity, intellect, strength and resilience.’

As well as delivering the training, Rachel and Nick heard reports about a range of activities and attended the launch of the newly established Goldfields Aboriginal Language Centre. There was also a pop-up Aboriginal language museum, a short films festival and an Aboriginal arts and crafts market.

To read more about the conference, visit http://wangka.com.au/index.php/conference
You can read more about WANALA on their website: http://wanala.org/