

Indigenous Archives Network Western Australia (IANWA)

Bringing them Home

In April 2025, the Global Indigenous Data Sovereignty Conference was held on Ngunnawal Country in Canberra. The Conference marked ten years since the first Indigenous Data Sovereignty event hosted by the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia where attendees discussed the implications of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for data. Three hundred First Nations people from around the world attended the first two days of this event, and the delegates' message was clear: ***Data Has Spirit – Our Records Are Family*.**

Honouring recommendation 53 of the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody*, 1991, recommendations 21 to 30B1 of the *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families,* 1997, and all subsequent published scholarship, community, academic, and sector reports on data sovereignty for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the Indigenous Archives Network Western Australia (IANWA) calls for renewed investment and reform of the archive sector's research infrastructure to enable fair and equitable, word-searchable access for Aboriginal families to all historical records created 'about them.'

Our Membership

The newly formed Indigenous Archives Network Western Australia (IANWA), founded in July 2026, comprises Indigenous and non-Indigenous community, academic, and archive sector members interested in improving access to records for Western Australian Aboriginal families, creating and caring for community archives and supporting recordkeeping in Indigenous organisations.IANWA Membership is by invitation and/or by letter of application to the leadership group.

About our Founding Members

- **Dr Jacinta Walsh**
  Jacinta Walsh is a proud Yawuru/Jaru/Gija mother of three sons from Western Australia, with English and Irish heritage, a Lecturer/Indigenous Research Fellow with the ARC Centre of Excellence for Indigenous and Environmental Histories and Futures (CIEHF) and a Lecturer with the Monash Indigenous Studies Centre (MISC) in Melbourne. She serves on the Victorian Stolen Generations Reparations Package Advisory Committee and the First Nations Biography Working Party (FNBWP) of the Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB). Jacinta is an adoptee who, through her research, advocates for First Nations youth in juvenile justice and out-of-home care, promotes Indigenous family perspectives in academia, and supports Indigenous family access to all archives. Her work emphasises trauma, culturally informed truth-telling, reconciliation, and generational healing.

- **Annie Cameron**
  Annie Cameron is a non-Indigenous linguist and archivist who works in the Aboriginal Languages and Cultural Heritage field in Western Australia. She is the Convenor of the Australian Society of Archivists, WA Branch Committee for 2025-2026, holds a BA (Hons) in Linguistics and Indigenous Studies (UNE 2017) and a Graduate Diploma in Records Management and Archives (Curtin 2021). She is currently completing her PhD at Charles Darwin University and is the inaugural Archivist at the Berndt Museum, School of Indigenous Studies, University of Western Australia.

- **Michelle Broun**
  Michelle Broun is a proud Yindjibarndi woman living and working on Whadjuk Noongar Boodja. She is a highly qualified curator, creative producer and cultural planner with a background in textiles and design. For over three decades, Michelle has worked in the arts, culture, and creative industries to empower and elevate the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and artists. Over the past decade, Michelle has managed the Indigenous Community Stories program at the Film and Television Institute of WA; was lead Indigenous Curator for the WA Museum, Boola Bardip for four years, and at the John Curtin Gallery, Curtin University for 2 years; then independently as guest curator with the Wadjemup Project. She is currently working remotely as a Research Fellow with LaTrobe University and assisting the State Library of WA with descriptions as part of its AV Digitisation Project.

- **Cim Sears**
  Cim is a First Nations artist who completed a Master of Visual Arts by Research at Edith Cowan University in 2020. She has a Photography degree from Edith Cowan University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Anthropology and Politics from the University of

Western Australia. Prio to becoming a full-time artist, Cim studied and worked as a Social Worker specifically in the area of women's health. Cim volunteers at the Berndt Museum and currently works from her art studio at Goolugatup/Heathcote where she is also a member of the 'Swan River Print Studio'. Printmaking processes, text, painting, archives and photography make up Cim's multidisciplinary art practice that has become a lifelong search to piece together lost fragments of her Indigenous history and to discover and reclaim narratives that are lost from memory and the historical landscape.

- **Carly Lynch**
  Carly is a non-Indigenous cultural heritage professional with experience in the arts, local history, and museum sectors across local and state government. She is currently the Archives and Data Management Specialist at the Puutu Kunti Kurruma and Pinikura Aboriginal Corporation. Holding qualifications from Curtin University and the Australian Society of Archivists, Carly is passionate about the stewardship of collections and their role in preserving knowledge and fostering connections to Country and culture.

Our Principles

Our core principles include: First Nations data sovereignty, self-determination, social justice, sustainability, a community-centered focus, and building partnerships with institutions that hold archives important to Aboriginal families/communities in Western Australia. We assert these principles through respectful communication, understanding that together we are stronger.

Healing and empowerment of First Nations families

For Aboriginal families and communities, access to archives is far more than access to records; it is a pathway to healing, truth, connection, and empowerment. Archives can reconnect people with ancestors, Country, kinship, language, culture, and histories that have been violently disrupted and deliberately withheld. When Aboriginal people can find, interpret, and share these records on their own terms, archives become living sources of strength, supporting biographical and genealogical research, restoring family stories, affirming identity, and enabling the intergenerational transfer of knowledge that nourishes present and future generations.

Truth-telling and Healing Is a Collective Responsibility

Ancestors, Elders and community members have been truth telling through storytelling, song, art, and performance, since time immemorial. Colonisation disrupted this tradition and parts of these stories have since been captured in colonial archives. The stories held in the archives are more than records; they are documented evidence of truths that must be acknowledged, reconciled, and shared with care. Truth-telling is essential to healing; What we collectively do not heal in this lifetime, future generations must heal. Communities have created and sustained their own archives for truth-telling. Truth-telling provides an opportunity to listen, and support self determination in archives. Truth-telling is a shared responsibility, and improved access to

archives, while recognising that some data access must be appropriately mediated for non-Aboriginal peoples, can play an integral role in Australia's capacity to face its past honestly. By centering on the truth, these archives can help us all build a more reflective, loving, cohesive, and compassionate future for generations to come.

Our Aims

Informed by the recommendations made in the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, 1991, the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (Bringing Them Home), 1997, and subsequent reports and policies on data sovereignty for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and First Peoples globally, our aims include:

- Significantly improve access to records for Western Australian Aboriginal families, through digitisation, system development, right of reply, and right to full and integral records.
- Promote systems that support people seeking access to their records, and advocate for support for people reading and working with their records to know of their past, present and future (emotional, cultural, spiritual).
- Advocate for the return of records to family and community custody for family history, language, culture and history continuity.
- Advocate for sustainable recordkeeping and community archives - Research, Access, Infrastructure, Training and Employment in Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Registered Native Title Body Corporates and other Indigenous community organisations, including Indigenous families and remote communities.
- Western Australian Indigenous communities are treated fairly and in-line with best practice within state, national and international mandates, regarding the Rights of Indigenous People, in relation to access to their records

Our Australian Story

The search through historic archives is an exploration of our shared humanity. Right now, globally, we are witnessing the live-streamed violations of human rights, territorial warfare, and social unrest, as humans fight one another while simultaneously causing catastrophic damage to our biodiverse ecologies, the very ecosystems that give us life. We have forgotten ourselves, our capacities and responsibilities as humans to be compassionate and loving beings and to lead by centering and nurturing the health and well-being of women and children and our vital, life-giving biodiverse ecosystems.

This violence has deep roots. For centuries in Europe, class exploitation was justified through Eurocentric, religious, gendered, and racialised hierarchies. These beliefs enabled churches, states, and industries to enslave Indigenous peoples, institutionalise Indigenous children, and

expand domination, extraction, and exploitation globally. By separating people from each other and from land, water, and sky Country, human-centred governance normalised oppression, invasion and violence, harming First Peoples, women, and children most.

For more than 60,000 years, Indigenous communities in Australia have achieved and sustained their civilizations' success through the centrality of family connections. Kinship connection has been recognized as sacred and the responsibility of the collective, the whole community. From birth, children have been taught by their extended family, in loving connection, their vast kinship relationships and how these relationships exist through deep interconnection within abundant and biodiverse Countries. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Country is family, and the health and wellbeing of Country's biodiversity is prioritized, knowing that through deep time, when Country thrives, so too does human life. For more than 6000 generations of human life in what is now called Australia, this relational lived experience was effectively passed down from one generation to the next, providing the children of the human and non-human collective with an unbreakable and immense sense of sovereignty, identity, belonging and place.

The records of Australia's colonisation hold the world's most recent living memory of early and subsequent encounters where these two worlds have met: one grounded in relational kinship and care for Country, the other in separation, hierarchy, and colonial violence. The generational poverty experienced in Aboriginal communities today, along with the ongoing overrepresentation of Indigenous children in out-of-home care and of Indigenous children and adults in justice systems, is the living legacy of these worlds still meeting in ways that are harmful. To end this harm, Australia must confront and work to heal. As we harm our First Peoples globally, we are harming all of our human connections to our glorious biodiverse ecologies – our human connections to Country, and to each other as connected loving beings on Earth.

Healing from trauma requires acknowledging violence, believing it can be healed, and reconciling with the truth of what was done. This work begins with access to archives and to the documented history of a past that demands collective healing for all our futures.

Our Funding

We will aim to build partnerships with Indigenous community organisations, WA Government Agencies, advocacy groups and philanthropic bodies to fund the required work in alignment with the aspirations of WA Aboriginal genealogies, languages, cultures, arts, and health community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) and the WA History Collective.

Archives of Interest

- **Historical Police & Court Archives** held by SROWA, WA Police Museum and in private collections, in the homes of retired police and in police and government buildings.
- **Aboriginal Family files** held and managed by Aboriginal Family History in the State Library of WA.
- **Papers of Phyllis Mary Kaberry**, 1934–1936, field notes held at AIATSIS.
- **The Berndt Field Notes** Archive held at the Berndt Museum, UWA.

- **WA Family Collection,** Berndt Museum, UWA.
- **Norman Tindale & Joseph Birdsell, Phillip Epling and their wives' field notes** held at The South Australian Museum & University of California.
- **Papers of A.P. Elkin**, held at the National Library of Australia.
- **Church Archives**, such as the Salvation Army, Beagle Bay Mission records, Archdiocese of Perth / Broome, the New Norcia Records, and the United Aborigines Mission records held Australia-wide in 'private collections'.
- **John Forrest 1874 original trek diaries** held by SLWA, 1869 Scrapbook available online through History West**.**
- **Kimberley Language Resource Centre** holds recordings/photos/ video and more.
- **Daisy Bates Collection,** National Library of Australia (53 boxes).
- **Settler Diaries** - located in various institutions and private locations.
- **Australian Inland Mission (AIM).** National Library of Australia.
- **Noel Butlin Archive.** Pastoralist diaries/activity. Held by ANU in Noel Butlin Archives Centre.

Contact Us

If you are interested in becoming a member we ask that you complete an IANWA Membership Application Form online. If you have specific questions and would like to reach out, please reply by email to one of our founding members listed below, with the Email Subject Heading: **IANWA Inquiry/Interest.**

- **Dr Jacinta Walsh** (Jaru, Gija, Yawuru), Lecturer / Indigenous Research Fellow. Monash University. Indigenous Studies Centre. jacinta.walsh@monash.edu Mob. 0447554662

- **Michelle Broun.** (Yindjibarndi) Research Fellow Nguru Ninti, Curator, Australian First Nations Art. mickyjoybroun@icloud.com

- **Annie Cameron.** Senior Berndt Museum Archivist, Berndt Museum, UWA. Convenor of the Australian Society of Archivists, WA Branch Committee for 2025-2026. annie.cameron@uwa.edu.au

- **Carly Lynch.** Archives and Data Management Specialist. Puutu Kunti Kurruma and Pinikura Aboriginal Corporation carly.lynch@pkkp.org.au

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