



## Feeling the Past: Indigenous Emotions and History

**Dates:** 9–10 November 2017

**Venue:** Fox Lecture Hall G.59  
First Floor, Arts Building  
The University of Western Australia

**Convenor:** Dr Shino Konishi  
(shino.konishi@uwa.edu.au)

**Website:** <http://www.historyofemotions.org.au/events/feeling-the-past-indigenous-emotions-and-history/>

This is a free event but registration is required. Morning and afternoon tea will be provided.

Please register with Pam Bond  
(emotions@uwa.edu.au) by  
1 November 2017.

This symposium will examine how and why Indigenous historians, writers, curators, artists and filmmakers use emotions as a means of investigating and narrating the past. Participants will explore how such emotional histories may be motivated by the desire to heal and reconcile with the past, or to restore a sense of community pride and dignity to our ancestors, or express anger and rage over past injustices and their legacies. We will also investigate the techniques used to convey emotions, and to deepen connections, recognition, or acceptance of Indigenous histories, and explore whether such techniques reflect Indigenous cultural practices and protocols.

### SPEAKERS:

- Michael Aird (The University of Queensland)
- Tony Birch (Victoria University)
- Clint Bracknell (Sydney Conservatorium of Music, The University of Sydney)
- Natalie Harkin (Flinders University)
- Barry Judd (Charles Darwin University)
- Shino Konishi (The University of Western Australia)
- Greg Lehman (University of Tasmania)
- Leah Lui-Chivizhe (The University of Sydney)
- Jill Milroy (The University of Western Australia)
- Frances Peters-Little (University of Technology Sydney)
- Elfie Shiosaki (Curtin University)
- Michael Jalaru Torres (Jalaru Photography)
- Jakelin Troy (The University of Sydney)

Richard Walley will provide the Welcome to Country

Image: *Baptism*, Michael Jalaru Torres, 2017.  
Courtesy of the artist.


**THURSDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2017 FOX LECTURE HALL G.59, ARTS BUILDING, THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

8.30–9am	Registration
9–9.30am	Welcome to Country by Richard Walley
	Welcome Andrew Lynch, Director, ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions, UWA Jill Milroy, Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Education, UWA

**SESSION 1: THE PLACE OF EMOTION Chair: Shino Konishi (UWA)**

9.30–10.30am	Tony Birch (Victoria University), 'Two Fires: Christmas Hills to Banff and Home'
10.30–11.00am	MORNING TEA (provided)

**SESSION 2: HISTORY AND EMOTIONS Chair: Cindy Solonec (UWA)**

11–12.30pm	Leah Lui-Chivizhe (The University of Sydney), '1836: Fury, Loss and Madness in Torres Strait' Elfie Shiosaki (Curtin University), 'Hand on Heart: Emotions and Letter Writing by Noongar People'
12.30–1.30pm	LUNCH (own arrangements)

**SESSION 3: EARLY EMOTIONAL WORLDS Chair: Clint Bracknell (Sydney)**

1.30–3.00pm	Jakelin Troy (The University of Sydney), 'Vocabularies of Emotion: What do the Earliest Studies of Australian Languages Tell Us About Human Relationships and Emotions' Shino Konishi (UWA), 'Reconstructing Aboriginal Emotional Worlds'
3pm–3.30pm	AFTERNOON TEA (provided)

**SESSION 4: COLONIAL REPRESENTATIONS AND EMOTIONS Chair: Vanessa Russ (UWA)**

3.30–4.30pm	Michael Aird (The University of Queensland), 'Transforming Tindale'
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**FRIDAY 10 NOVEMBER 2017 FOX LECTURE HALL G.59, ARTS BUILDING, THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**
**SESSION 5: EMOTIONS AND FILM Chair: Leah Lui-Chivizhe (Sydney)**

9.30–10.15am	Frances Peters-Little (University of Technology Sydney, Independent filmmaker), 'Falling In and Out of Love with Referendums'
10.15–10.45am	MORNING TEA (provided)

**SESSION 6: IDENTITY AND EMOTIONAL PRACTICES Chair: Aileen Walsh (UWA)**

10.45–12.15pm	Barry Judd (Charles Darwin University), 'The Great Motivator: Indigeneity, Emotions and Australian Indigenous Studies' Michael Jalaru Torres (Jalaru Photography) 'Scar Expose Light: Using our <i>Lian</i> (Spirit) to Light and Expose Our Hidden Trauma and History through Photography and Text'
12.15–1.15pm	LUNCH (own arrangements)

**SESSION 7: ARCHIVES OF EMOTION Chair: Robin Barrington (Curtin)**

1.15–2.45pm	Natalie Harkin (Flinders University), "'I weave back to you": Archival-poetics For the Record' Clint Bracknell (The University of Sydney), 'Engaging with Archival Noongar Song in Community Workshops'
2.45–3.15pm	AFTERNOON TEA (provided)

**SESSION 8: CLOSING REFLECTIONS AND DISCUSSION Chair: Shino Konishi (UWA)**

3.15–4pm	Jill Milroy (UWA)
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## Two Fires: Christmas Hills to Banff and Home

**Tony Birch** (*Victoria University*)

In deciding on a presentation for this conference I mulled over several critical and 'objective' approaches to both my writing and thinking and what approach might be of value to conference participants. To discuss the place of emotion in creative, political and intellectual scholarship from an Aboriginal perspective takes many forms. I could list them, critique them, theorise them, fictionalise them, even sing them, if prompted. Instead, I finally decided to write an essay that 'projected' my emotional state, my emotional intelligence and vulnerability through an experiential piece of writing; to document and frame my emotional engagement with time, place and the political realities of social connection, wanted and unwanted.

## 1836: Fury, Loss and Madness in Torres Strait

**Leah Lui-Chivizhe** (*The University of Sydney*)

In 1836, in a fit of colonial rage, a large turtle shell mask was stolen from its keeping place on Auridh in the central Torres Strait. Protected and adorned over many years with seashells, ochre and human skulls, for Islanders the mask was imbued with agentive powers. To colonial authorities, however, it was a gruesome trophy and *proof* of the murderous savagery of Islanders. Through the use of colonial records and published accounts of the time, my presentation will tease out the emotional turmoil that accompanied the theft of the mask and contemplate the significance of its loss to Islanders.

## Hand on Heart: Emotions and Letter Writing by Noongar People

**Elfie Shiosaki** (*Curtin University*)

In her Mabo Lecture in Townsville earlier this year, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, June Oscar, reflected that "for many of you, I know that human rights are just words on a page and not a part of your lived reality". This presentation examines how emotions, and histories of emotions, assert lived realities in movements for human rights. It is a case study in discursive advocacy for Indigenous human rights, as evident in the many letters written by Noongar people in the archive in Western Australia. This advocacy emerged in a political context in which Indigenous rights were systematically violated under the 1905 Aborigines Act and the administration of the Chief Protector of Aborigines, A. O. Neville, from 1915 to 1940. Archival traces of this discursive advocacy by Noongar people reveal how emotions asserted Indigenous lived realities, and restored humanity to the inhumanity of colonisation.

## Discursive Journeys: Visual Identities from Nineteenth-Century Aboriginal Tasmania

**Greg Lehman** (*University of Tasmania*)

Much has been written about the formation of contemporary Indigenous identity in Australia. Discourse analysis drawing

on the work of Stuart Hall has pointed to the power of historical narratives in influencing not only structural relations of power impacting on minority peoples and perceptions of their culture in the twentieth century, but also on individual conceptions of self-identity. Hall established the importance of visual representations, strongly influencing approaches to critical examination of popular media. My recent research on the visual representation of Tasmanian Aboriginal people in colonial art points to the need to extend this examination to include early nineteenth-century images of Indigenous people and culture in Australia. This paper will discuss several examples of how depictions of Tasmanian Aboriginal people across multiple genres during this period have influenced an emotional landscape of discursive identities in Aboriginal Tasmania.

## 'Transforming Tindale'

**Michael Aird** (*The University of Queensland*)

In 1938, the anthropologist, Norman Tindale embarked on a two-year scientific expedition documenting Aborigines from around Australia. Most of the original material collected during this expedition is held by the South Australian Museum. In the early 1990s some of this collection relating to the genealogies and photographs of some 1100 people from five Queensland and two northern New South Wales Aboriginal communities that Tindale documented was copied and supplied to the State Library of Queensland. Since then there has been a constant demand from members of the Aboriginal community looking for photographs and information about their families.

One of the many Aboriginal people that have accessed the Tindale collection is Vernon Ah Kee. In 2012 I worked alongside Vernon to curate an exhibition titled 'Transforming Tindale' at the State Library of Queensland. It was an exhibition that featured artwork that Vernon created of members of his family that were photographed on Palm Island in 1938 alongside many other photographs created during this scientific expedition.

All of these people photographed in 1938 were incarcerated in government settlements at the time of being documented with racist scientific intentions. In some ways these people were 'victims', considering that many aspects of their lives were controlled by government officials. They did not have the power to object to having these images taken. But when looking at many of these people, their strength and confidence can be seen. The exhibition featured text and images that highlighted controversial issues relating to anthropologists studying Aboriginal people and treating them as scientific objects, while also looking at the importance of Aborigines now being able to gain access to photographs and documents that relate to their family histories held by archives, museum and libraries.

My paper will discuss how the 'Transforming Tindale' exhibition challenged the viewer to think about the people in these photographs, to question what they may have been thinking and feeling as they were being photographed. By looking into the faces of these people that lived many years ago and thinking of them as real people, it forces the viewer to ask what they may have thought of being studied like scientific objects. I hoped that as visitors looked at this exhibition they would begin to question racism, past government policies and what that these people lived through.

## Vocabularies of Emotion: What Do the Earliest Studies of Australian Languages Tell Us About Human Relationships and Emotions

**Jakelin Troy** (*The University of Sydney*)

In this paper I will explore the earliest studies of Australian languages dating from the late eighteenth century. I will reveal something of the emotions of the First Fleet and the Aboriginal people who were impacted on by their invasion of Aboriginal Countries.

These emotions were expressed by Aboriginal people and 'First Fleet' officers in documents including diaries, letters, field notebooks, official communications and particularly the so-called 'Dawes manuscripts', produced in the first few years of the invasion of Australia by England at the place we now call Sydney New South Wales. *Baragat* 'afraid', *gulara* 'angry', *wurul* 'ashamed', *madung* 'brave', *yurura* 'passionate': these are just some of the feelings and emotions expressed in the first fleet texts. However, there are two stand out emotions that have stayed with me since I began to explore the First Fleet documents as a young student. One is *'buduwa'* meaning to warm one's hands and then take the hands of another to warm them. Such tenderness— and that was between a marine and an Aboriginal woman. The other was *'guribara'* a word that struck fear into the hearts of the Aboriginal people in Sydney. It meant 'bearers of guns'. The *'yura'* Aboriginal people were afraid because of the guns. So much emotion in such little notebooks.

## Reconstructing Aboriginal Emotional Worlds

**Shino Konishi** (*The University of Western Australia*)

Early European explorers' and settlers' accounts of Aboriginal people have long been used as a window through which to observe so-called 'traditional' Aboriginal cultural practices and mores. Yet, scholars have been more reticent to use these sources as a way of gaining insights into the internal drives and feelings of Aboriginal people, aware that such accounts are mitigated by the authors' ethnocentric bias, obliviousness to cultural nuances, and misunderstanding and misrepresentation. Yet, by reading these accounts against the grain, we can tentatively reconstruct a picture of what they reveal about Indigenous people's feelings – about kin, country, and the arrival of strangers. What the early observers might have considered the endemic character traits of so-called 'savage' peoples, such as innate ferocity, timidity, or treachery, can be reconsidered as the emotional expressions of Indigenous individuals. Moreover, through detailed contextualisation, accounts of Aboriginal character traits might also provide insights into the emotional worlds of Aboriginal people, and the role of emotions in mediating social practices. Through this contextualisation we can better understand the seemingly oscillating emotions which were intrinsic to the performance of Indigenous ceremonial protocols which governed how to receive or repel strangers, as well as the apparently heartfelt and intimate

interactions which established kinship relations and forged new reciprocal obligations with the European strangers. We can also consider Indigenous emotions as connected to Country through instances where Aboriginal people made impassioned interventions to prevent early colonist from despoiling local environments through hunting and land-clearing, as well as the social performance of emotions, especially in response to death, the execution of customary law, and cross-cultural interactions. In this paper I will sketch out some insights into Aboriginal people's emotional worlds in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and reflect on how these insights resonate in contemporary Indigenous understandings of the past.

## Falling In and Out of Love with Referendums

**Frances Peters-Little** (*University of Technology Sydney*)

It would seem August 2017 became the death knell date for the extravagant publicity drive to engage Australians yet again in another Referendum on Indigenous reform to the Australian constitution. The suggestion that the fiftieth anniversary of the 1967 Referendum might have proven to be timely, in fact proved to be wrong. Instead it failed miserably, in spite of a five-year Recognise campaign led by government bodies and expert panels, all of whom were backed by major financial sponsors such as the AFL, NRL and Cricket Australia, QANTAS, and so on.

In my presentation I will argue that the recent campaign lacked 'heart', examining what damage did that have, and also what part historians have since played in dispelling the 'mythologies' that were created during the 1967 Referendum. As a historian and filmmaker I prefer to make documentary films because they allow room for a personal and emotional reading of the past. In this presentation I will draw on my experience as a filmmaker to explore a more compassionate reading of the Referendums and why we fall in and out of love with them.

## The Great Motivator: Indigeneity, Emotions and Australian Indigenous Studies

**Barry Judd** (*Charles Darwin University*)

Although academics who claim an Indigenous identity are motivated to engage in an academic career for a multiplicity of complex reasons, those of us whose scholarship directly engages with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are often motivated by a strong desire to know more about ourselves, our families and our cultural heritage. Shortchanged by a primary and secondary school education that excludes knowledge of Indigenous Australia, since the 1980s a growing number of individuals who claim an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander identity have sought out tertiary level studies to help in their personal quest to better understand themselves as indigenous people.

Drawing on my own experience, the personal motivation of identity is an important driver in the generation of research concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Work undertaken as an 'Indigenous academic' can therefore never be contained to the 40-hour working week, as the politics of identity collapses the distinction between work and non-work spheres of social activity. Identity and the desire to know more about Indigenous self and heritage also facilitates a professional context in which teaching and research ideas, agendas and projects are likely to be directed, shaped, influenced and

impacted by emotion. Running counter to the historical claims of the Western academe to objective truths; the utilisation of emotion by 'Indigenous academics' is critical to the production of scholarly research that gives voice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, concepts, world views, perspectives and understandings. Feelings of anger, sadness, surprise and conflict often accompany Indigenous scholars as they uncover knowledge and stories that retrace the trauma that marks the recent past and present of this continent. Indeed, such emotions are often the primary drivers of their research, often not often discussed in the formal professional forums of academia.

In this paper, I provide examples of how emotions have shaped my own experience as a professional researcher who claims an Aboriginal identity. In doing so I make a case for their place within the Western academe as a valid and valuable tool of research that can lead us in directions so called 'objective' and 'detached' research may not. I also argue that understanding the role they play in the production of Indigenous scholarly output is a process that needs to be much better understood by Australian universities both in terms of the benefits to research and the burden this places on individual Indigenous academics and their families and communities.

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## Scar Expose Light: Using Our *Lian* (Spirit) to Light and Expose Our Hidden Trauma and History Through Photography and Text

**Michael Jalaru Torres** (*Jalaru Photography*)

Being a photographer and an Indigenous man, I have faced many walls both from the wider society and in my community. The world often will see a black man as a threat, and even trying to document our people and struggles can be very problematic, both internally and externally, as I don't want to be seen as creating poverty porn.

I choose not to capture our people in this light; instead I choose to capture the stronger images of our people in our communities. My aim is to break down the walls of shame and jealousy that have hindered our people across generations, and which are a huge part of the internal struggle we face as humans and artists.

Externally we are expected to create works that map our country and culture, expressed in colourful and easy-to-swallow imagery that is void of guilt. While this of course is only a small part of our story, anything else that is expressed can sometimes be seen as being an activist or a humbug in the art world.

In creating my own works I tend to draw the viewer in with a colourful and nice composition with all the hallmarks of a perfect image. Once I have their eye, the words tell a different story. Where they would expect a fun light-hearted tale, I shift the narrative, mostly but not always, to the darker truths of our people and history, revealing a story under the surface that can only be seen through scars, both literal and metaphorical.

Each time I capture a story it reminds me of my own scars – of cancer, self-doubt, a broken family and the constant struggles of being a black man. These walls I do not share alone, as each person I ask to work with will face their own scars – be it fears of jealousy within the community or from partners, or the shame factor of

opening up or also fighting against the 'think you are too good for us' symptom of black communities, both remote and urban.

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## "I weave back to you": Archival-poetics for the record

**Natalie Harkin** (*Flinders University*)

This paper presents 'Archival-poetics' as an active, embodied reckoning with history and the colonial archive, particularly South Australia's Aboriginal records. Family records at the heart of this work trigger questions about surveillance, representation and agency, bearing witness to the state's archiving processes and the revelation of what is both absent and present on the record. Four threads weave and bind this work: Blood Memory as a narrative tactic; 'Dimensions of Haunting' as a way of knowing; the paradox and violence of the 'Colonial Archive'; the creative resilience, and the significance of 'Grandmother Stories'.

Archival-poetics works to expose state-shaped assimilation policies, particularly those targeting Aboriginal girls for removal from their families, and those enabling indentured domestic labour. The historical, social and political contexts of such policies are critical to understanding intimate and paradoxical relationships with the colonial archive, and its seething impression on contemporary life. Emotion and intuition compels such archival-intimacy, particularly when reckoning with traumatic, contested and buried episodes of history that inevitably return to haunt.

As my research progressed I unintentionally re-created and became stuck in the very thing I was interrogating: the archive-box. The only way to unbind myself was to write poetry, exhibit my words, and weave my way out. Weaving became central to this work, as conceptual metaphor and as literal, cultural practice. 'Ekphrasis' as a literary device, is also used to explore affective relationships with works by other Indigenous writers and artists that resonate in unexpected and uncanny moments where the potency of place, rememory and Grandmother stories collide. Such artistic and literary interventions are examined through four inter-textual, mixed-media installation works that move across poetry, prose and performative visual art practice; aiming to contribute to larger counter-hegemonic narratives of colonial history.

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## Engaging with Archival Noongar Song in Community Workshops

**Clint Bracknell** (*The University of Sydney*)

Community workshops undertaken to recirculate archival audio recordings of Noongar songs from the south coast of Western Australia have involved both the interpretation of lyrics and reconnection to ancestral song traditions. Although these workshops have consisted of a group of Noongar people working in a methodical, scholarly way with old recordings of fathers, grandfathers and uncles, there has been an obvious emotional dynamic to proceedings. Senses of pride and loss have permeated these sessions – feelings that often underpin the reclamation of cultural material once held in archives. Developing old recordings of songs to the spiritual, emotional and intellectual point at which the community can breathe life into them again requires a necessarily gradual process, enhanced by the cultural, genealogical and geographical connections between the people, songs and Country involved.





