ABOUT THE PROJECT

In 2010, this project was funded under an Australian Research Council Fellowship and Development Fund for Indigenous Research and Researchers. The project aims to explore the capacity of national museums to incorporate Indigenous stories and representations into their exhibition spaces, by providing best-practice examples of engagement and presentation.

The project is specifically interested in the ways that technology as a tool of relocated stories and participation might support the museum to incorporate this self-identification and engagement.

The project will demonstrate the capacity for mainstream museums to encourage and facilitate a curatorial process that enables Indigenous individuals and communities to have genuine input and control over their own representations.

The project will focus on exhibitions deemed ‘successful’, and will be carried out from an Indigenous perspective. As in Kant’s transcendental dialectic, I have found myself in my own quandary.

After many years of working in the reclamation of human remains largely outside of the context of managing material culture – the items were typically returned to be buried - I have found myself automatically expressing concern at the space of the museum as a holder of Indigenous peoples’ material wealth and stories. This project aims to challenge my own internal dialectic, a position that many Indigenous peoples have felt as intruders in the space of the museum, by reflecting on the role that the museum can play in reconnecting and reinvesting our own experiences and our own representations in the national museum space.

The outcome of this research is intended to provide for Indigenous communities, museums and those invested in the collaboration between these groups, a comprehensive review of exemplary moments in new media, interactive displays and in the online exhibition of Indigenous cultural representation in major mainstream museums. It is hoped that the research outcomes provide for Indigenous communities and museums a way to progress with respect, strategies and a positive energy of engagement.

SCHEDULE

AUG-OCT 2010 & JAN 2011
NATIONAL MUSEUMS IN THE UNITED STATES
Visiting the Smithsonian Museum System and targeted community and university museums.

NOV-DEC 2010
NATIONAL MUSEUMS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM
Visiting the informal British Museum System, the National Museum Wales, and the National Museums of Scotland.

JAN-APRIL 2011
NATIONAL MUSEUMS IN AUSTRALIA
Visiting the Informal Museum System of Australia and targeted State Museums.

MAY-DEC 2011
REVIEW PROCESS
The findings will be ordered into a reporting format, made available in part to contributors, and prepared for manuscript development.

DEC 2011-JULY 2012
RESEARCH FINALISED
Final manuscript form in preparation for publication.

WHAT WE ARE ASKING

Rather than a series of questions, our engagement with curators, project managers and other museum professionals is in conversation. The same issue is raised with all participants, who are asked to discuss one or more processes, exhibits, exhibition series or museum engagements and events that best demonstrate how technology has effectively facilitated the process in the representations of Indigenous community/ies.

If you participate, what control will you have over your contribution?

Conversations held will be privileged, with all parties given the opportunity to withdraw statements, ideas or exchanges at any time. Explicit use of this material will be sought up to the time of publication. Our first priority is protecting our participants, and it is important to note that this project is aimed at positive examples of Indigenous digital engagements in the national museum space. Ethical approval has been provided for this research project by Batchelor Institute Human Ethics Committee, along with an indemnification of the research outcomes. Info can be provided by contacting: ethics@batchelor.edu.au.

More information, schedule and permissions forms will be provided on request.

I am an Aboriginal Australian woman of the Wiradjuri people. The Wiradjuri are a nation that reside largely in what is now known as the state of New South Wales. We are a river, mountain and country people, known for our journeys and relationships (songlines and kinship system) with communities on the East and South Coast of Australia.

I work in the Research Division of Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education as an Australian Research Council Indigenous Research Fellow (ARC Indigenous Research Fellow) and have a background as artist and curator. Australian Research Council Discovery Indigenous Researchers Development Fellowships and Funding are highly sought-after federal government awards, the first for our Institute. This project is funded for a period of three years.

Batchelor Institute is the largest Indigenous-only tertiary education site in Australia, with a student population at a tertiary level in Australia. We are located in the Northern Territory in the far north and central parts of Australia, with students and staff coming to study from all over the country.

I am working on this project with the support of two other researchers: Dr Peter Stephenson and Dr Lyn Fasoli. Peter is the Head of the Research Division at Batchelor Institute, and he has a keen interest in education, engagement and community support processes. Peter is a non-Indigenous Australian who has a deep commitment to Indigenous engagement in research. Also working on the project is Dr Lyn Fasoli. Lyn, an American-born non-Indigenous Australian senior researcher at the Institute, is an expert in the field of Indigenous Early Childhood Studies, and has completed a significant study on engagement of children in museum spaces.