

# INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF *Indigenous Languages*

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2019 has been declared by the United Nations General Assembly as the International Year of Indigenous Languages (IYIL2019). This is an opportunity for all Australians to celebrate and engage in a national conversation about our Indigenous languages and the fact that 90% are considered endangered.

## *Indigenous Australian languages today*

- More than 250 Indigenous Australian languages including 800 dialectal varieties were spoken on the continent at the time of European settlement in 1788.
- Today only 13 traditional Indigenous languages are still acquired by children.
- Approximately another 100 or so are spoken to various degrees by older generations, with many of these languages at risk as Elders pass away.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia are speaking out about the need to maintain, preserve and strengthen Indigenous Australian languages. We are now seeing a surge of energy, with people in many communities working to learn more about their languages, and to ensure they are passed on to the next generation.

*Strong cultural identity enables one to feel proud of themselves, and speaking and maintaining ones language raises self-esteem and enables one to feel good about themselves. Traditional language is important for maintaining strong cultural connections. Where traditional languages have been taken away from communities, a sense of loss, grief and inadequacy develops. To keep communities*

*and generations strong, traditional language being passed from one generation to another is vital.*

**Brooke Joy, descendant of Boandik people from the Mount Gambier region in South Australia** (Community, identity, wellbeing: The report of the Second National Indigenous Languages Survey, 2014)

## *AIATSIS and IYIL2019*

AIATSIS has planned a range of activities to take place throughout the year to celebrate and recognise the diversity of Australian Indigenous languages and their importance in supporting cultural resurgence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and in shaping our national identity.

A full list of events and detailed information will be added to our IYIL webpage (<https://aiatsis.gov.au/IYIL2019>) throughout the year. However, AIATSIS also has ongoing and specific programs highlighting Indigenous Australian languages in IYIL 2019.

The **AUSTLANG** database, contains 850 records of documented language varieties (languages, regional dialects, clan-based dialects) from referenced sources and about 300 records of “languages” which have been included in the historical record, but not confirmed. AUSTLANG supports the discovery of written and recorded materials about and in language. AUSTLANG language codes are currently being implemented in the National Library of Australia and Trove, demonstrating AIATSIS as a leader in this field for libraries across Australia and the world to follow.



The **AIATSIS Dictionaries project** is providing funding for final production stages of twenty dictionaries of Indigenous Australian languages. This includes dictionaries from all language contexts – languages still spoken such as Warlpiri (Central Australia), languages spoken by some Elders but not younger people such as Gija (north-east Western Australia), and languages revived from Elders' memories and historical sources such as Dhurga (south-east New South Wales).

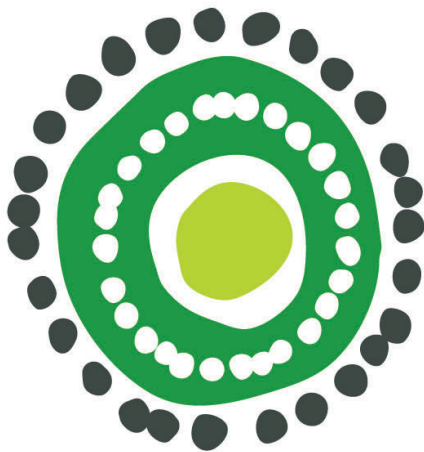
In partnership with the Department of Communications and the Arts and Australian National University, AIATSIS is working on a **National Indigenous**

**Languages Report** to be released later this year. This follows our previous reports of National Indigenous Languages Surveys conducted in 2005 and 2014 and will provide the most updated, comprehensive account of Indigenous Australian languages.

The **AIATSIS Australian Indigenous Languages Collection** was established early in 1981 to bring together printed material written in Australian Indigenous languages. It now contains more than 4,500 titles and has been described as highly significant, leading to its inclusion in the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Register.

The AIATSIS Languages Collection also includes a significant range and depth of unpublished manuscripts, audio and moving image items, many of which were compiled and recorded by early AIATSIS (AIAS) research grants. Since collections began in 1964, the AIATSIS Languages Collection has continued to support language maintenance and revival through our collection and sharing resources.

You can also join the conversation online using **#IYIL2019** and **#IndigenousLanguages**.



# 2019 AIATSIS

## NATIONAL INDIGENOUS RESEARCH CONFERENCE

RESEARCH FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

**1<sup>ST</sup> TO THE 3<sup>RD</sup> JULY 2019 BRISBANE QLD**

## ANIRC 2019

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) will co-convene the AIATSIS National Indigenous Research Conference with QUT in 2019. It will be held at QUT's Gardens Point campus in Brisbane over three days, 1 to 3 July.

The theme is Research for the 21st century. The 2019 conference will build on our previous themes of impact and engagement, to explore the interweaving strands of capacity of research and the transformative capability of Indigenous research for the 21st century.

Registrations are now open through our website. For further information, please email:

**[anirc@aiatsis.gov.au](mailto:anirc@aiatsis.gov.au)**