



AIATSIS

Return of Bardi Jawi artefacts to Country

**Return of Cultural Heritage Project:
Repatriation of Bardi Jawi cultural heritage
material from the Illinois State Museum**

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AIATSIS acknowledges and thanks the Bardi Jawi Nation and the Illinois State Museum.

Cover image: Bardi Jawi material returned from the Illinois State Museum.

Image credit: Iain Johnston, AIATSIS.

Warning: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers should be aware this document may contain sensitive information, images or names of people who have since passed away.

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Executive Summary

Between 2018 and 2020 the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) partnered with the Bardi Jawi to repatriate a collection of significant cultural heritage material from the Illinois State Museum (ISM). This partnership was part of the Return of Cultural Heritage (RoCH) project, where AIATSIS facilitated and secured the return of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage material to Country in order to support those Custodians to maintain their cultural practices. This report describes the partnership, collaborative research and ultimately the success of AIATSIS and Bardi Jawi's efforts to repatriate their material. It also demonstrates how the repatriation of cultural heritage material strengthens communities and culture, and promotes reconciliation and healing.

Acronyms

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
GERAIS	AIATSIS Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies
ISM	Illinois State Museum
KALACC	Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Cultural Centre
KLC	Kimberley Law Council
MM	Manchester Museum, The University of Manchester
NT	Northern Territory
PBC	Prescribed Body Corporate
RoCH project	Return of Cultural Heritage project
UC	University of Chicago
UK	United Kingdom
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
USA	United States of America
WA	Western Australia

Key Terms and Definitions

Collecting institution	Museums, universities, libraries, galleries and archives – organisations or institutions which hold and care for all forms of cultural heritage material.
Community	A group of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people who identify as a cultural unit.
Country	For the purpose of this document, the term 'Country' means an area of land or body of water to which a community, organisation or individual has a cultural and/or spiritual connection, and in which they have rights or interests.
Cultural heritage material (material)	Things, or their remnants, which have been created or modified by the efforts of humans. In the case of the RoCH project, all forms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage material, including but not limited to objects, audio visual, artwork and documentary cultural heritage material.
Custodian	An individual with cultural authority or knowledge which is recognised by the relevant Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community.
Elders	Knowledge holders within a community, some of whom are Lawmen / Law women.
KALACC	The Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre (KALACC) is the Kimberley Region's Peak Indigenous Law and Culture Centre. Based in Fitzroy Crossing, KALACC supports the traditional cultural practices of the 30 language groups of the Kimberley Region. Incorporated in 1985, KALACC has a proud history of advocating for culturally based self-determination for the Kimberley.
Lawman / Law woman	A male / female knowledge holder within an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community, who has responsibilities for culture, ceremonies and to make important decisions on behalf of the community.
Native Title Bodies, Aboriginal Corporations, Native Title Representative Bodies	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned corporations, peak bodies and organisations that represent or work with or for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Please note that these terms have specific meanings but are used generally within this document.
Senior Lawman / Law woman	The most senior among Lawmen / Law women and the most significant knowledge holders within a community. Senior generally implies a person is an Elder but not necessarily.
Traditional Owners	Members of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community. Within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, some cultural heritage material is owned by individuals, while other material is the responsibility of the community, who are stewards of that material to ensure it is looked after for future generations.

Acknowledgements

This report would not have been possible without the generous support and contributions of the Senior Bardi Jawi Elders and men, in particular Frank Davey, Joseph Davey, Kevin George, Russell (Wossy) Davey, Robert (Deli) Wiggan, Daniel Oades and Phillip (Bibido) McCarthy. We acknowledge the contribution and advice of Neil Carter and Tom Putuparri Lawford of the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre (KALACC), the support of Col Woodman of Ardyaloon INC and the work of Ingrid Button of IAS Logistics. Special mention should be made of the contribution of Daniel Oades and the Bardi Jawi Rangers for their support of the project. The work and support of staff from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, particularly staff in the United States of America (USA) was greatly appreciated. Special mention should be made of Cate Mascari and Rubén Franco from the Australian Consulate-General Chicago. Finally, we'd like to acknowledge the time, support and hard work of Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko, Brooke Morgan, Claire Martin and all the staff of the Illinois State Museum (ISM) and AIATSIS staff.

All mistakes and errors are our own.

The AIATSIS-led RoCH project was funded by the Australian Government as part of the measures to mark the 250th anniversary of James Cook's first voyage to Australia.

Partners

To repatriate cultural heritage material is a large undertaking and AIATSIS could not have achieved this without the generous support and partnerships of:



1 The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) is Australia's only national institution focused exclusively on the diverse history, cultures and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia. We conduct research to the highest ethical standards, directly benefiting the communities we work with. Our partnerships span the globe, including government, academic, corporate, cultural and community sectors. Our unique and dynamic convergence of knowledge, resources and expertise enables us to tell the nation's story and enhance the lives of all Australians. The functions of AIATSIS were established under the *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Act 1989 (Cth)* (AIATSIS Act). They are:

- to develop, preserve and provide access to a national collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage;
- to use that national collection to strengthen and promote knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage;
- to provide leadership in the fields of:
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research; and
 - ethics and protocols for research, and other activities relating to collections, related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and
 - use (including use for research) of that national collection and other collections containing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage;
- to lead and promote collaborations and partnerships among the academic, research, non-government, business and government sectors and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in support of the other functions of the Institute; and,
- to provide advice to the Commonwealth on the situation and status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage.

AIATSIS has a growing collection of over 1 million items encompassing archives, films, photographs, audio recordings, art and artefacts, published and other resource materials. The Institute publishes award winning books, journals, CDs, DVDs and apps that engage people with the stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia.

The vision of AIATSIS is a world in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and cultures are recognised, respected, celebrated and valued.

2 Introduction

The Return of Cultural Heritage (RoCH) project was part of a suite of initiatives funded by the Australian Government to mark the 250th anniversary of James Cook's voyage to the east coast of Australia, henceforth Cook 2020. The legacy of Cook's voyage continues to impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and is generally regarded as being the catalyst for the widespread removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage material. These items were stolen, collected or purchased and then transported to overseas collecting institutions, thereby removing the material from the culture and lives of the present day Custodians. Thus, Cook 2020 was a poignant time to intensify the effort to return cultural heritage material to its Custodians and Owners for the purpose of cultural maintenance and revitalisation.

In 2019 and 2020, AIATSIS scoped, facilitated and secured the return of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage material to Country in order to support those Custodians to maintain their cultural practices. In doing so, AIATSIS contributed to a global discussion about the repatriation of cultural heritage material, a discussion that many nations around the world have been involved in for decades. It is hoped AIATSIS' efforts will inform and intensify this discourse in the future.

Overview of the Return of Cultural Heritage Project

The RoCH project supports the Australian Government's commitment to Articles 11 and 12 of the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) and the aspiration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to have their cultural heritage material held in overseas institutions returned.

The RoCH project formed part of a larger *View from the Shore* narrative which AIATSIS fostered during the Cook 2020 anniversary to support the cultural resurgence of Australia's First Nations peoples and signal to the nation and globally that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is respected, celebrated and valued.

The RoCH project goals were to:

- Facilitate and secure the return of cultural heritage material from overseas collecting institutions to Country or a nominated keeping place.
- Build relationships between overseas collecting institutions and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Develop an appropriately accessible database of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage material held in overseas collecting institutions.
- Prepare a business case for a future work program.

The RoCH project ran for 2 years (July 2018 to June 2020). The team comprised Lyndall Ley (Executive Director), Christopher Simpson (Director), Tamarind Meara (Research Manager), Jason Lyons (Research Manager), Alana Harris (Community Liaison Manager), Dr Iain G Johnston (Senior Researcher), Rose Rutherford (Research Officer) and Diana Quadri (Research Officer). Jasmine Tearle (Research Officer) and Jeffrey Paul (Research Officer) were also contracted for a short period to undertake research on collections and data entry.

The RoCH project team drew upon AIATSIS' unique and irreplaceable role within Australia's research framework and its reputation for rigorous and independent research across the breadth of Indigenous studies and affairs. Key to AIATSIS' work is cultural competency. For the RoCH project team this involved acting in ways which supported the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and acknowledging that colonisation still affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The RoCH project aimed for the community partnerships to help all Australians to feel proud of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and promote each community's sovereignty.

The real powerful part of self-determination, indeed sovereignty, is the freedom to define ourselves and our context and our situation. So projects like this that build and rebuild and support our culture and give us, in a sense, access to our values, and give us the ability to exercise self-determination, the power to define and articulate our own identity are really, really important. I think that's an aspect of self-determination that we haven't really come to grips with as a country. And in many ways even as Indigenous Australians we're still fronting up to that and that's why institutions like AIATSIS are so important, because we help support and facilitate that process.

Craig Ritchie, AIATSIS CEO

Ethical Review of the Return of Cultural Heritage Project

AIATSIS recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the right to be fully engaged in any processes, projects and activities that may impact them. Indigenous repatriation programs, whether involving cultural heritage material or data and knowledge, must proceed on this basis. The AIATSIS *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies* (GERAIS) establishes a frame work for designing and carrying out ethical research, including research involving collections. GERAIS is informed by the rights of Indigenous peoples as articulated in UNDRIP.

In the implementation of the RoCH project, AIATSIS employed a staged engagement approach based on the principles of GERAIS and Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). The five Aboriginal communities involved in the project (Aranda, Bardi Jawi, Gangalidda and Garawa, Nyamal and Yawuru) were engaged at the earliest possible stage process and at the centre of the all decision making processes.

The RoCH project's research methodology underwent review by the AIATSIS Research Ethics Committee to ensure it conformed to appropriate ethical standards for research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The project was approved by the AIATSIS Research Ethics Committee on the 13th of March 2019.

3 Success of the Return of Cultural Heritage Project

Returning cultural heritage material to Country for purposes of cultural maintenance and revitalisation is a key aspiration of First Nation communities across the world and the RoCH project demonstrated how this aspiration can be achieved for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Fundamentally, the project demonstrated how to successfully partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to return their cultural heritage material.

In the course of the RoCH project, AIATSIS identified 199 overseas collecting institutions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage collections (see also Cooper 1989; Kaepler & Stillman 1985). In the course of the RoCH project:

- Over 100,000 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander objects have been identified in overseas collecting institutions (this excludes private collections);
- 124 institutions expressed a willingness to share information regarding their collections (at the time of preparing this report we have received information from 108 institutions);
- 73 expressed an eagerness to establish a relationship with AIATSIS and/or First Nation communities in Australia; and
- 45 expressed a willingness to consider a repatriation request.

AIATSIS is continuing to work with 124 institutions to establish the preliminary geographical provenance and cultural origin of collections / objects. Information gathered will be documented in an appropriately accessible database of cultural heritage material held overseas (currently under construction).

Based upon this research, six case studies (returns) from two collecting institutions, Illinois State Museum (ISM) and the Manchester Museum, The University of Manchester (MM), were selected for further investigation. The case studies included cultural heritage material from five Nations. These comprised:

- Aranda³ (ISM and MM),
- Bardi Jawi (ISM),
- Gangalidda and Garawa (MM),
- Nyamal (MM), and,
- Yawuru (MM).

AIATSIS engaged with representatives of these First Nations to confirm custodianship of the material and to explore partnerships.

In collaboration with, and on the authority of Aranda, Bardi Jawi, Gangalidda and Garawa, Nyamal and Yawuru Nations, AIATSIS prepared formal requests for the unconditional repatriation of 85 culturally significant objects. Requested items were secret sacred, ceremonial and secular objects (including but not limited to: boomerangs, shields, spears, clap sticks, body ornaments and necklaces). The requests were assessed and approved by the ISM and MM on the 9th of September 2019 and 2nd of October 2019, respectively.

³ Aranda / Arrernte, the Senior Aranda Elders and men requested we use the former spelling throughout the RoCH project.

Infographics displaying some of the results of the RoCH project.



In October 2019, AIATSIS staff members, Christopher Simpson (Wakka Wakka Nation) and Jason Lyons (Wiradjuri Nation), along with representatives from the Aranda and Bardi Jawi Nations travelled to Springfield, Illinois in the United States of America (USA) to collect 42 objects. An official handover of the material was held at the ISM on the 22nd of October 2019.

I am extremely honoured and fortunate to have supported the Aranda and Bardi Jawi peoples to return their cultural heritage material to Country. The repatriation from Illinois State Museum was the first under the RoCH project and the official handover was one of the proudest moments of my career. As a Wiradjuri man, I think the repatriation of material is significant. It is essential to Indigenous peoples' wellbeing and cultural strength – it promotes truth telling, healing, reconciliation and the preservation of our enduring cultures.

Jason Lyons, RoCH project Research Manager

Following the return of the material to Australia, AIATSIS facilitated its return to Country. These events were marked with small on Country celebrations with Aranda at Mparntwe (Alice Springs) and with Bardi Jawi at Ardyaloon (One Arm Point, Cape Leveque).

In November 2019, AIATSIS along with representatives from the Gangalidda and Garawa Nations travelled to Manchester, United Kingdom (UK) to collect 18 objects. Nyamal representatives nominated AIATSIS to act on their behalf. An official handover of the material was held at Australia House, London. AIATSIS facilitated the direct return of materials to Country, and celebrations occurred with Nyamal at Marapikurrinya (Port Hedland) and with Gangalidda and Garawa at Mougibi (Burketown).

In March 2020, the third and final delegation with representatives from Aranda and Yawuru Nations was scheduled to collect the remaining 25 objects negotiated for unconditional return. However, owing to the Coronavirus Disease of 2019 (COVID-19) global pandemic and following consultations with Aranda, Yawuru and MM, AIATSIS decided to cancel the delegation to Manchester. Because of the extenuating circumstances the material was collected by an IAS Logistics partner and returned to Australia without a delegation travelling to Manchester. This was a difficult decision for the Senior Aranda and Yawuru men but their trust in AIATSIS and partnership with the RoCH project team helped them to make the safest choice for their communities. Shortly after, the Yawuru material was returned to Country at a private ceremony near Rubibi (Broome). In contrast owing to border restrictions, the Aranda material, under the direction of the Senior Aranda Loremen, was placed in temporary storage at IAS' climate controlled secure facility in Mascot, New South Wales. The material will be collected by the Aranda men and returned to Mparntwe (Alice Springs) in late 2020.

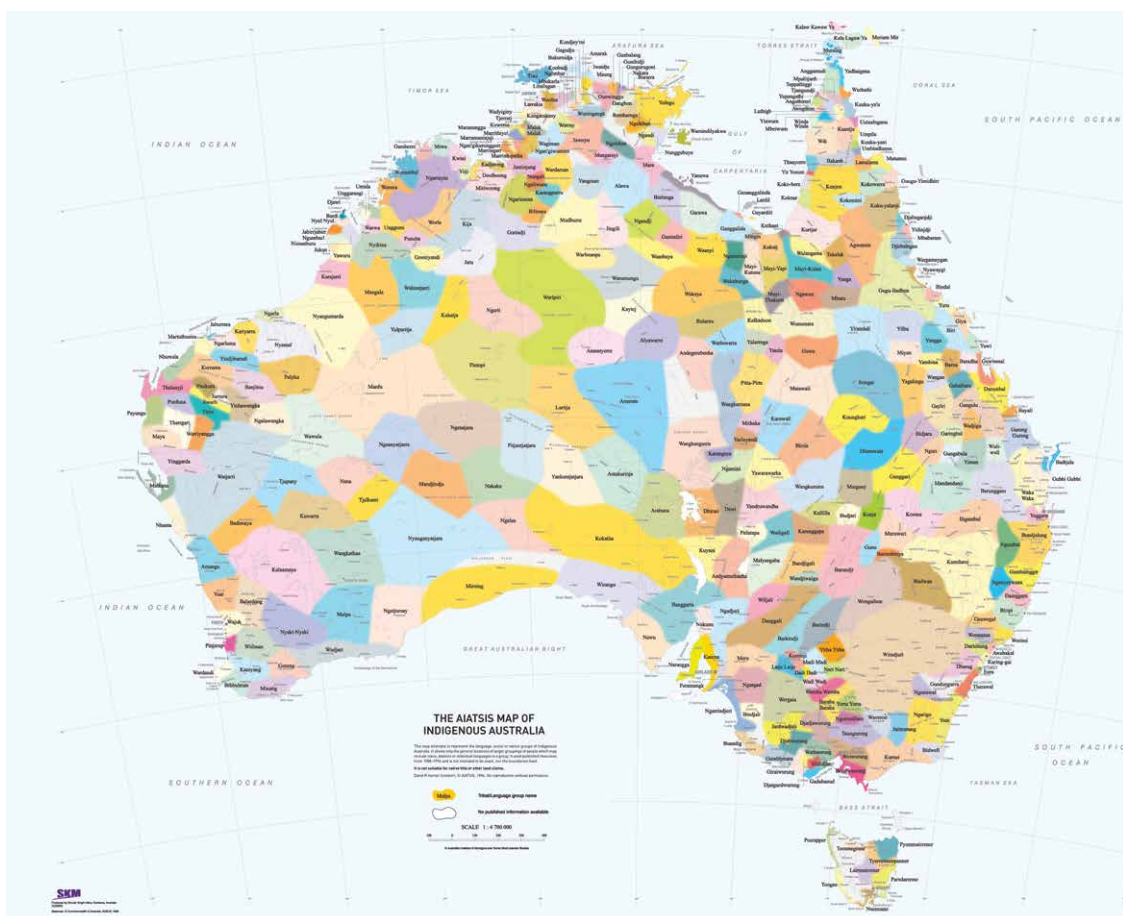
The successful returns by the RoCH project are evidence that overseas collecting institutions, irrespective of the complexity and difficulties associated with repatriation, are willing and able to unconditionally repatriate cultural heritage material (including secular material). The returns are a major step forward for overseas collecting institutions in at least two respects: because they extend the process of return from ancestral remains to cultural heritage material and because the returns were repatriations, instead of a loan, which has been the primary method for returning cultural heritage material previously.

4 Bardi Jawi and AIATSIS Repatriation Partnership

Bardi Jawi Country is on the Dampier Peninsula. We are surrounded by sea-country and islands, and our waters are known for powerful tides and currents.

Dwayne George, Bardi Jawi Ranger

The Bardi Jawi people are the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters at the northern tip of the Dampier Peninsula and the western end of the Buccaneer Archipelago, in the Kimberley region of northern Western Australia.



This map attempts to represent the language, social or nation groups of Aboriginal Australia. It shows only the general locations of larger groupings of people which may include clans, dialects or individual languages in a group. It used published resources from 1988–1994 and is not intended to be exact, nor the boundaries fixed. It is not suitable for native title or other land claims. David R Horton (creator), © AIATSIS, 1996. No reproduction without permission. To purchase a print version visit: <https://shop.aiatsis.gov.au/>

Bardi Jawi Material Held at the Illinois State Museum

The Bardi Jawi material repatriated from the ISM was originally loaned to the museum in 1942 by the Department of Anthropology at the University of Chicago (UC), via Dr Fay Cooper Cole. This material was collected by Gerhardt Laves, a linguist graduate of UC and one of Cole's students. Laves undertook fieldwork in Australia between August 1929 and August 1931 and he intensively studied six languages: 'Kumbaingeri' (Gumbaynggir) in northern NSW; 'Karadjeri' (Karajarri) at Lagrange Bay, north-west WA; 'Bardi' (Barda) at Cape Leveque, north-west WA; 'Kurin' (Goreng) near Albany, WA; 'Hermit Hill' (Matngele) and 'Ngengumeri (Ngan'gimerri) at Daly River, Northern Territory (NT) (see Nash 2003). Despite not finishing his PhD, Laves' work is well regarded, indicated by his correspondence with and reference by preminent anthropologists of this period A.P Elkin, D.S Davidson and N.B. Tindale (see Nash 2003). In a letter written by Cole to Laves on the 4th of October 1929 regarding his fieldwork and the collection of objects, Cole wrote "Be sure and gather all you possibly can." (AIATSIS MS 2188: Item 10.1).

Laves undertook research in Bardi Jawi Country in 1930 and spent time at Cape Leveque after the 9th of June 1930. He recorded sacred and secular stories in Bardi (Barda) language and noted working with Timothy, Hamlet and Yanie (both married to Timothy), Kailwidi Billy, Willey Barda HomBardana, Sambo, Munjo Willey, Harry, Goodara, Doyal and Gregory (Djarwin) (MS 2188: Items 2.10-2.16). The Bardi Jawi material he collected consisted of secret sacred objects, restricted ceremonial objects, open ceremonial objects and secular objects.

Laves does not state in his records from whom in Bardi Jawi Country he collected the material; however, the list of Bardi Jawi material he collected comes after information recorded from Sambo and Munjo in his note book (MS 2188: Item 2.16). It is possible the material was collected from these two men, who may have also provided the information about the material in Bardi language; however, due to the number of objects and the types of objects Laves collected it is as likely this collection was acquired from various members of the Bardi Jawi community.

Developing the Repatriation Request With Bardi Jawi

The initial consultation regarding the Bardi Jawi material was a meeting with Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre (KALACC) on 6th of May 2019 in which AIATSIS sought advice regarding whom to speak to about material from Cape Leveque WA. Initial research had identified Bardi Jawi as the owners of the ISM material but we sought confirmation and advice as to whether there could be competing claims for the material. Christopher Simpson and Iain Johnston met with Neil Carter, KALACC's Senior Repatriation Officer, and Tom Putuparri Lawford, KALACC's Senior Law and Ceremony Man. In the meeting KALACC advised Bardi Jawi were the owners of this material from Cape Leveque and there were no competing claims. They also advised AIATSIS should initially speak with Frank Davey, the Senior Bardi Lawman.

On the 8th of May 2019, Christopher and Iain met with Frank and Joseph Davey, Senior Lawmen, Ashley Hunter, a Lawman, and other Senior Bardi Jawi men. This meeting was facilitated by Wayne Barker from KALACC and conducted in the KALACC office in Broome. Frank and Albert investigated photographs of the material and identified many of the objects as belonging to Bardi Jawi. It was agreed some of the objects, although used in ceremony, were not restricted to initiated men and in the next meeting more of the Bardi Jawi community should be present.

The next important repatriation meeting with Bardi Jawi took place on Country at Ardyaloon (One Arm Point) from the 17th to 19th of June 2019. In attendance were Frank and Joseph, Ashley and other Senior Bardi Jawi men, including Russell 'Wossy' Davey, Senior artist and dancer, as well as Irene Davey and Valerie Wigan, Senior Bardi Jawi women. More than 20 Bardi Jawi men attended this meeting at Ardyaloon. Once again, photographs of the material were analysed by the community and a list of material that was certain to belong to Bardi Jawi was created. This meeting exemplified the reciprocity of the AIATSIS research methodology and effectiveness of partnering with Indigenous communities to undertake repatriation.

At the conclusion of this meeting, the consulted Bardi Jawi community entrusted and endorsed AIATSIS to submit a repatriation request to ISM for the Bardi Jawi material on their behalf. The repatriation request was assessed by ISM's Board of Directors on the 9th of September 2019 and was unanimously accepted. One board member wrote to Dr. Brooke M. Morgan, the Curator of Anthropology at ISM's Research & Collections Center:

Unquestionably this is the most complete repatriation request I have ever encountered and there should be no question about the Board's action with regard to deaccession... Thanks for your sensitive attention to this culturally significant matter.



(Left to right) Willy Maher Senior, Peter Hunter, Christopher Simpson, Russell Davey, Philip McCarthy, Kevin George and Eddy James.

Preparations for Collecting the Material From the Illinois State Museum

The repatriation planning meetings occurred over the 13th and 14th of August 2019. In these meetings Bardi Jawi discussed who should travel to Illinois to collect their material, where and how the material would be cared for by Bardi Jawi at their Keeping Places at Ardyaloon and what assistance AIATSIS could provide to ensure the material can be best incorporated into Bardi Jawi cultural practices. On the evening of the 14th, Senior Bardi Lawman Kevin George had a phone conference with Brooke and Claire Martin, Research Fellow, from ISM to explain to them how important the material is to Bardi Jawi and the importance of having it returned. This discussion was relayed to the ISM's Board of Directors. At these meetings the Bardi Jawi Rangers also became a key partner in organising the journey. Bardi Jawi decided Russell Davey and Robert Wiggan would travel to collect their material and represent Bardi Jawi at the official handover ceremony.

AIATSIS' Work With the Illinois State Museum

AIATSIS initially contacted ISM on the 29th of November 2018, to inform them of the RoCH project and ask if they would be willing to consider the repatriation of material from their collection to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia. Brooke Morgan responded explaining ISM were keen to establish a relationship with AIATSIS and would be willing to discuss the repatriation of material held in their collection to communities in Australia. Over the first half of 2019, AIATSIS corresponded with ISM to better understand the material held in their collection, its collection / acquisition history, geographical provenance and who may be the Custodians of it. As noted, ISM researchers conducted further research on the material received from the UC to help with the process. On advice from the Bardi Jawi Lawmen and out of cultural respect, ISM also brought a male photographer and curator out of retirement to photograph and rehouse the secret sacred material. On the 17th of June 2019, Lyndall Ley, RoCH Project Executive Director, met with the ISM's staff to discuss the potential repatriation of items from its collection. During the meeting, the ISM's Director provided assurances that she would recommend the returning of material from their collection to its Traditional Custodians to the ISM's Board of Directors upon receiving AIATSIS' formal return request. After Lyndall's visit, ISM confirmed they were legally able to repatriate material from their collection, a crucial step to returning the material to the Bardi Jawi.

After the ISM's Board of Directors approved the request (9/09/2019), AIATSIS started working in earnest with ISM to prepare the material for repatriation. As some of the Bardi Jawi material was secret sacred men's business, ISM brought in male staff members to build the storage boxes for the safe and secure transportation of the material.

We're excited and happy that the Bardi Jawi material is coming home and believe that this is the right thing to do. These items were taken a long time ago but we're glad that the museum looked after them and are now returning them back to the rightful tribe. Other important things are missing too and a lot more work needs to be done, and we're glad it's happening. We'd like to thank the Australian Government for their help.

Kevin George, Senior Bardi Lawman

5 Freight and Logistics

While collaborating with overseas collecting institutions and relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, AIATSIS organised the required import permits in accordance with the *Biosecurity Act 2015* and all relevant letters of exemption to transport the material home. This included permits and permissions issued by the:

- Department of Agriculture for the import of Australian native plant material back into Australia;
- Department of Health for the import of human material (hair) into Australia; and
- Department of Immigration and Border Protection for the import of sensitive material, including weapons (spears) into Australia.

In addition to the above, while not required under the *Protection of Moveable Cultural Heritage Act 1986* (Cwth), a letter of exemption was also sought from the then Department of Communications and the Arts.

AIATSIS submitted an Import Permit Application to the Department of Agriculture in August 2019. The application was approved shortly thereafter.

To administer and manage the logistics and freight for the return of the repatriated cultural heritage material from overseas, AIATSIS engaged IAS Logistics, a Supply Nation certified business. IAS had extensive experience in handling sensitive and fragile freight, an understanding of the complex nature of the repatriation process and had demonstrated cultural competency through past experience. Kingsley Munday AM, an Aboriginal man and Managing Director of IAS Logistics, explained their role in the process:

IAS Logistics is a family business but more importantly we are an Indigenous family. The work we do in our daily lives involves moving valuable, delicate and secure objects across the country and around the world but there are times when we have the privilege to do things which have a higher meaning.

The removal of Indigenous cultural objects from their land to be taken thousands of kilometres around the world into foreign land places them in a state of unrest. No matter whether we are black or white, the reuniting of these objects with their community and with their land, with their place of origin, is to bring them to their natural resting place and to their ultimate place of peace.

To return them to Country is of immense significance to the communities, but it also gives to us and our people a tremendous sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. Once each task is completed we too feel a sense of calm and peace – it was meant to be.

6 Journey to Collect Bardi Jawi Material From the Illinois State Museum

Robert Wiggan and Russell Davey left the Kimberley on the 16th and 17th of October 2019, respectively. They travelled from the Kimberly to Illinois, USA over four days accompanied by Christopher Simpson and Jason Lyons of AIATSIS. On their repatriation journey, the Bardi Jawi delegates were accompanied by two delegates from the Aranda Nation, Cleopas ‘Lofty’ Katakarinja and Braydon Kanjira, who also travelled to ISM to collect their material.

Russell and Robert were welcomed to Illinois by Logan Pappenfort, 2nd Chief Peoria Tribe, the First Nation of Illinois. At the welcome, they met with the ISM’s staff and their Director Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko. On Tuesday the 22nd of October, Robert and Russell first saw the Bardi Jawi material and had private time with the items in order to make sure everything was ready for its safe transportation home.



The AIATSIS delegation at the ISM welcome: (left to right) Braydon Kanjira, Russell Davey, Robert Wiggan, Logan Pappenfort, Christopher Simpson, Brooke Morgan, Lofty Katakarinja, Jason Lyons and Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko.

On Wednesday the 23rd of October an official handover ceremony took place where Russell and Robert took custodianship of the material on behalf of Bardi Jawi and ISM deaccessioned the material from its collection. Dignitaries at the handover event included David Bushby, Consul-General of Australia in Chicago, and George Godfrey, of the Potawatomi Nation. Russell and Robert performed at the ceremony; Russell played the repatriated boomerangs and sang while Robert danced.



Russel Davey speaking to guests at the return ceremony (left). Robert Wiggan painted up ready to perform the Ghost Dance at the ceremony (right).

One of the most significant meetings during the official handover ceremony was between the Laves family and the Bardi Jawi delegates. It was a special moment when Russell and Robert met with Laves descendants and were able to share with them how important the material collected is to the Bardi Jawi.



The AIATSIS delegation and the Laves family.

The significance of the handover event was felt in Australia and the USA. In the USA, stories ran in National Public Radio, The Illinois Times and Fox News; in Australia, the ABC, Guardian and NewsCorp also ran stories. The thoughtful words of Russell were published around the world:

We are really honoured and proud to be here in Springfield and to be representing our people. On behalf of our Elders past and present we have travelled a very long way to return our material back home. The items were made with a small number of tools and their return will allow us to better understand how our ancestors made these particular items.

IAS Logistics ensured the material was handled in a culturally appropriate manner and Russell and Robert oversaw the final packing of the material before it was transported in a cargo plane to Australia. Russell and Robert spoke about the importance of the material returning to Bardi Jawi Country and thanked those present for their support in preparing the material for its journey to Australia. Of the whole experience Brooke said:

This repatriation is a collaborative effort that promotes healing. The Illinois State Museum strives to be an example to other institutions holding colonial materials and hopes this will inspire museums to reflect critically on their collections.

The Material Returning Home

The Bardi Jawi material landed safely in Sydney and was welcomed to Eora Country on the 4th of November 2019 by Aunty Lola Ryan from the Dharawal people of La Perouse.

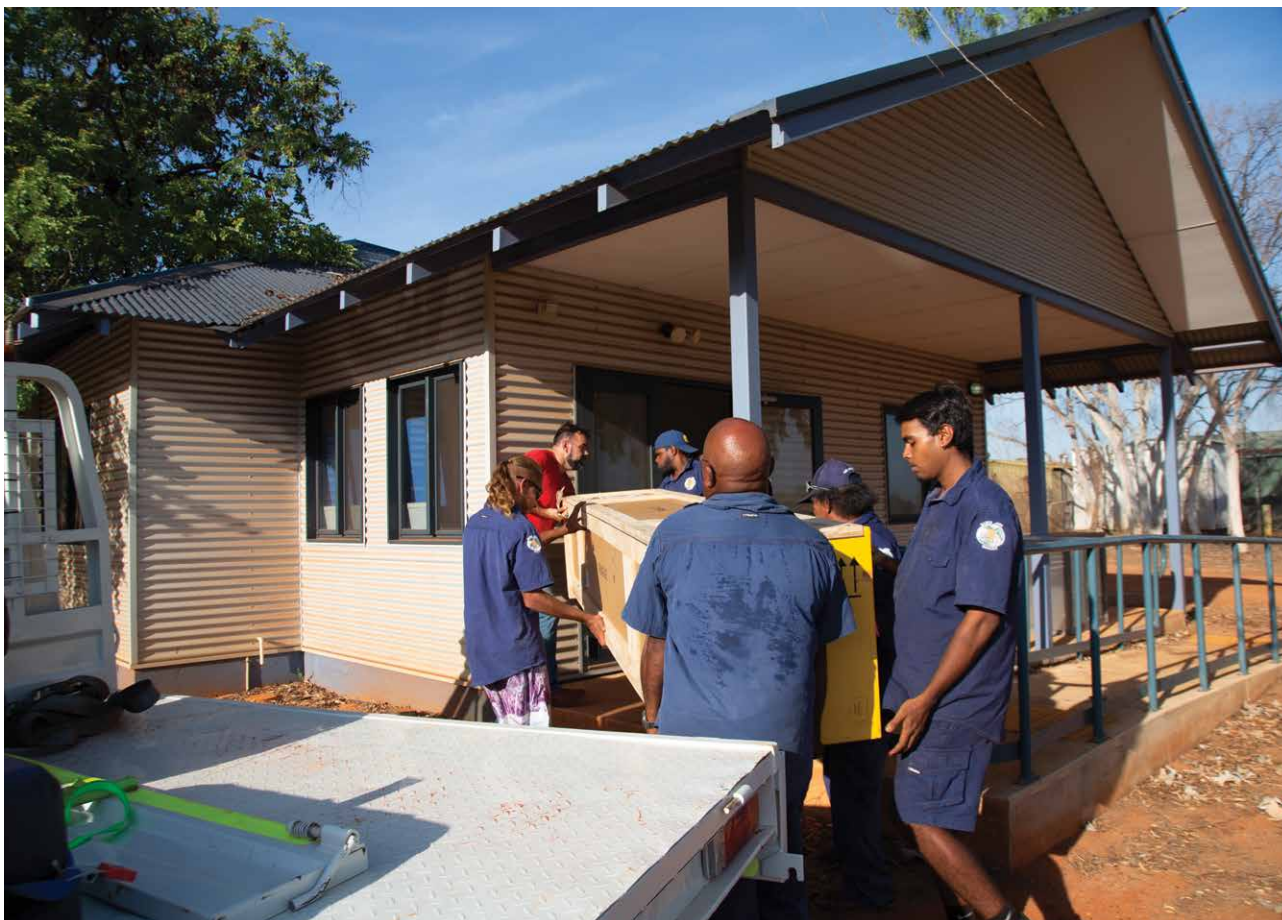


Aunty Lola Ryan, George Boubeta and Christopher Simpson at IAS, Mascot Sydney.

From Sydney the material was flown to Perth and transported by IAS to Broome. The material was temporarily held at the Kimberley Land Council (KLC), under appropriate cultural protocols, from where the Bardi Jawi Rangers led by Phillip (Bibido) McCarthy collected two of the boxes, one containing the secret sacred material overseen by Senior Elder Trevor Sampi, and the other containing the secular artefacts. Christopher and Iain drove the final box containing the spears to Ardyaloon that afternoon.



Left: Bardi Jawi Rangers privately loading their material onto the ute at the KLC. Right: Christopher and Iain's ute loaded with the spears box on the Cape Leveque road.



AIATSIS and Bardi Jawi Rangers carrying the material into the PBC office.

Unboxing the Bardi Jawi Material

The Bardi Jawi Rangers and Russell took the secret sacred material directly to the Bardi Jawi Keeping Place, while the Senior Lawmen, Elders and Rangers unpacked the secular material on the 30th of November at their Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC) office. Claire Moodie of ABC Kimberley recorded the event and published a story about the return.

We were actually overwhelmed by their appearance, by the state they were in, especially the spears, they were quite amazing. There's a sense of joy and pride in seeing these things being well looked after and in such good condition.

Philip McCarthy, Bardi Jawi Senior Ranger



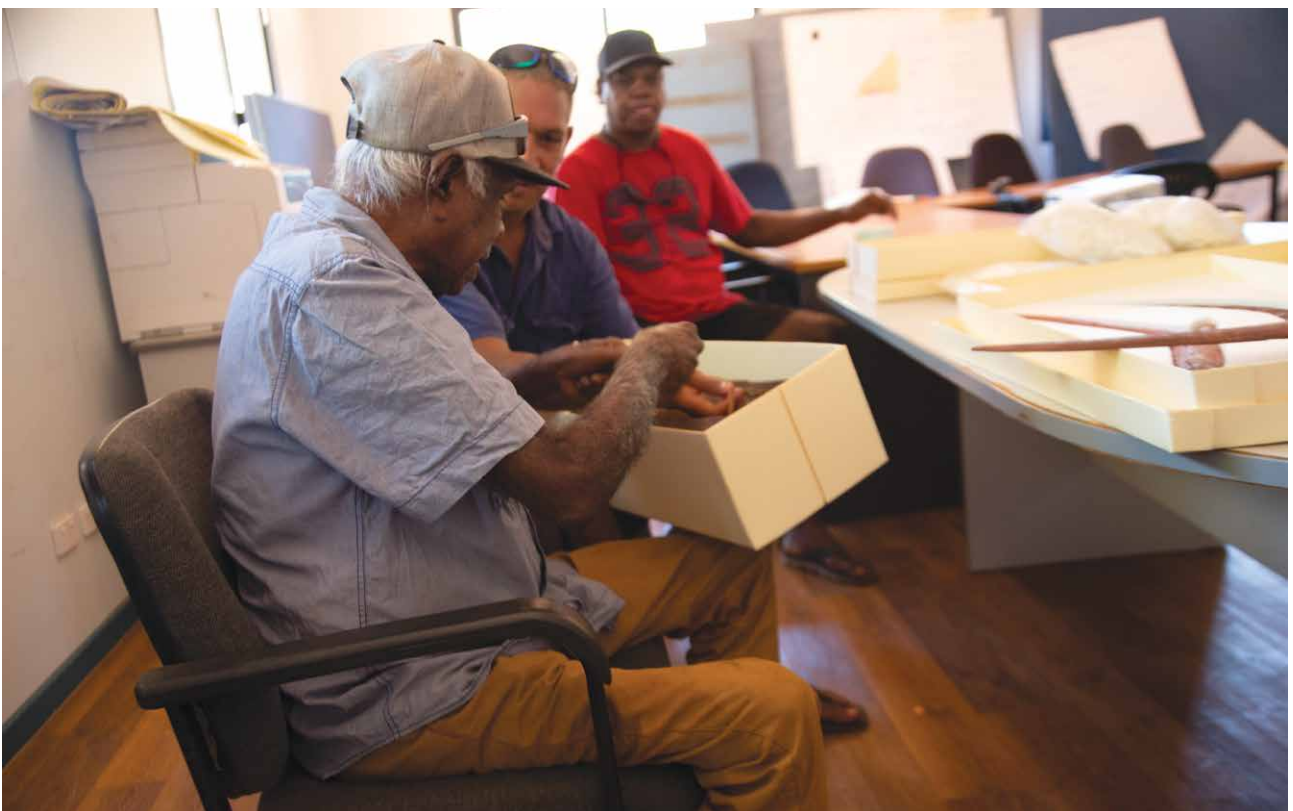
AIATSIS and Bardi Jawi Rangers unpacking the material inside the PBC office.



Robert Wiggan unboxing a Bardi Jawi ceremonial shield (above left). Bardi Jawi Rangers unboxing the spears (above right).



Senior Lawmen Joseph Davey unboxing a Bardi Jawi boomerang (top). Close up of a Bardi Jawi Barrgayi, tusk shell bead necklace (above).



Senior Lawman Frank Davey being interviewed by Claire Moodie from the ABC (top left). Senior Lawman Joseph Davey looking at the Bardi Jawi artefacts (top right). Senior Lawman Joseph Davey, Azton (Ashley Hunter) unboxing Bardi Jawi artefacts (bottom).

Impacts of COVID-19 on the RoCH Project

A ramification of the COVID-19 global pandemic on the RoCH project was the cancellation of the final ‘follow up’ research phase with each community partner. In this phase, AIATSIS intended to meet with key individuals involved in the repatriation, particularly Elders and other knowledge holders, to discuss the material and the impact of its return in their community. This research phase was intended to inform the next section of this report and to document each community’s perspective on the significance of repatriating cultural heritage material to First Nations people for the purposes of cultural revitalisation and maintenance.

7 The Significance of the Bardi Jawi Material Coming Home

We are very strong with our culture here, we still practise our culture here, but it [the repatriated material] does give us, strengthen us more and for the young people to look at these things and say hang on ... we can't lose it now, we've just got to carry on.

Frank Davey, Senior Bardi Lawman

The power of Frank's words are evident to all those involved in the Bardi Jawi repatriation, as they speak directly to the significance of culture in defining who we are and the role objects have in maintaining culture. The Bardi Jawi material repatriated from ISM was used by the ancestors of Frank and the other Bardi Jawi people to practice and maintain their culture almost 100 years ago, and by being home on their Country the items can fulfil that function again.

In Christopher and Iain's first discussions with the Senior Lawmen about the possibility of a repatriation request they spoke about the Barrgayi (tusk shell necklaces). These necklaces were made by women, often mothers, for young boys who were about to attend their first initiation ritual. The Senior Law Women, Irene Davey and Valerie Wigan, explained in their youth they collected tusk shells with their mothers and aunts at Goolarrgoon and would make Barrgayi necklaces for the young men in their community. The practice of making Barrgayi has slowed since the 1980s as people began to incorporate modern beads and European material into their necklace making practice while maintaining the function of Barrgayi in ceremonies. Frank and others explained the pair of Barrgayi returned will help to reinvigorate this practice as part of a KALACC culture program.

Some of the Bardi Jawi material will be put back into use for ceremonies and other items will be displayed at the PBC office for the community to learn from and for visitors to see. Of the material that will go back into ceremonial service and as a pearl shell carver himself, Russell has said:

When I carve Guwarn (pearl) shell it comes from our Country. I tell personal and spiritual stories. It's about keeping our culture alive, and, when I dance, I am proud of who I am.

Russell Davey, Bardi pearl shell carver

As Frank signals in his quote, the returned material will be most utilised for teaching young people the stories these objects tell about Bardi Jawi people and Country. This is a sentiment echoed by other members of the Bardi Jawi community. The return of the material will help the Bardi Jawi Elders teach people about how their ancestors lived. In this way, the material will be significant and crucial to maintaining and revitalising Bardi Jawi culture now and in the future.

The Significance of the Return for Illinois State Museum

This section was contributed by Dr Brooke M. Morgan, Curator of Anthropology ISM Research & Collections Center.

Staff of the Illinois State Museum offer their sincere gratitude to Aranda representatives Braydon Kanjira and Lofty Katakarija and Bardi Jawi representatives Russell Davey and Robert Wiggan for taking the time to share stories from their cultures. The kindness and openness of these men affected everyone at the museum. After the evening presentation at the museum, one woman reflected on how important the return was and said "I'm proud of my state." We will look back on this repatriation as a turning point for the museum and remember the role you played in shaping our new direction.

Dr Brooke M. Morgan, ISM Research & Collections Center

The ISM recognises the significance of returning cultural heritage objects to their Traditional Custodians, in this case the Aranda and Bardi Jawi. More than returning items, it is a return of authority over cultural knowledge to these communities. One aspect of the ISM's mission is "to promote stewardship of cultural and natural resources for the future." The transfer of objects into the care of the Aranda and Bardi Jawi fulfils this mission, as Lawmen in each community will use the items in ceremony and to teach young men about their history. The ISM is honored to have cared for the objects for over seven decades and to be among the first to work with AIATSIS to return them home.



Boomerangs repatriated to the Bardi Jawi from the Illinois State Museum, October 2019.

8 Conclusion

The return of these objects is part of unlocking the rich history of this Country stretching back beyond the 18th century and for the Country that's got to be a valuable thing. It's got to add richness to our sense of who we are as Australians. It's got to add something of just different ways of looking at things.

Craig Ritchie, AIATSIS CEO

The vision of AIATSIS is to create a world in which all Indigenous peoples' knowledge and cultures are recognised, valued and respected. By returning the Bardi Jawi material to Country, AIATSIS achieved this vision and also created opportunities for people around the world to encounter, engage with and be transformed by the Bardi Jawi story. At the same time the return supported and facilitated Bardi Jawi's cultural resurgence and maintenance.



Frank Davey holding a pair of the repatriated boomerangs.

Looking at the boomerangs ... my God, these guys really did work hard to actually make these.

Frank Davey, Senior Bardi Lawman

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