



AIATSIS

Aranda-Kenhe Akngetyalpuma (Aranda belongings have been returned)

**Return of Cultural Heritage Project:
Repatriation of Aranda cultural heritage
material from Illinois State Museum
and Manchester Museum**

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AIATSIS acknowledges and thanks the Aranda Nation, the Illinois State Museum and the Manchester Museum.

Cover image: Braydon Kanjira at the Illinois State Museum return ceremony.

Image credit: Jason Lyons, 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 Senior Aranda Loremen to repatriate two collections of significant cultural heritage material from the Illinois State Museum and the Manchester Museum, The University of Manchester. 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 Aranda'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 Network
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
BAR	Board for Anthropological Research, University of Adelaide
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
MAGNT	Museum and Art Gallery Northern Territory
MM	Manchester Museum, The University of Manchester
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
RoCH project	Return of Cultural Heritage project
RSSA	Royal Society of South Australia
SRC	Strehlow Research Centre
UC	University of Chicago
UK	United Kingdom
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
USA	United States of America

Key Terms and Definitions

Aranda	Aranda / Arrernte, the Senior Aranda Elders and men requested we use the former spelling throughout the RoCH project.
Collecting institution	Museums, universities, libraries, galleries and archives – organisations or institutions which hold and care for all forms of cultural heritage material.
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, that 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 Loremen / Lorewomen.
Loreman / Lorewoman	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 Loreman / Lorewoman	The most senior among Loremen / Lorewomen and the most significant knowledge holders within a community. Senior generally implies a person is an Elder but not necessarily.
Strehlow Research Centre	The Strehlow Research Centre manages one of Australia’s most important collections of film, sound, archival records and museum objects relating to Indigenous ceremonial life. The Strehlow Collection was put together by Professor TGH Strehlow in his lifetime of anthropological research with the Aboriginal peoples of Central Australia. A significant part of the collection relates to ‘men’s-only’ sacred and secret ceremonies.
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 Aranda Elders, in particular Michael Liddle, Edward Rontji, Peter Wallace, Alan Drover, Braydon Kanjira, Cleophas 'Lofty' Katakarinja, Jonathan Conway and Mark Inkamala. We would like to acknowledge the support of the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory and the Strehlow Research Centre and their staff. Special mention should be made of the contribution of Shaun Angeles and Winston Green, of the Strehlow Research Centre, who greatly supported this project. The work of Ingrid Button of IAS Logistics was invaluable. The work and support of staff from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, particularly staff in the United States of America was greatly appreciated. Special mention should be made of Cate Mascari and Rubén Franco from the Australian Consulate-General Chicago. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the time, support and hard work of Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko, Brooke Morgan and Claire Martin of the Illinois State Museum and Esme Ward, Stephen Welsh, Gillian Smithson, Mark Furness and Alia Ullah of Manchester Museum, The University of Manchester 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:



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



**Australian
BORDER FORCE**



Australian Government
Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development and Communications
Office for the Arts



Australian Government
Department of Health



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Water and the Environment

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:

- Aranda (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.

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).

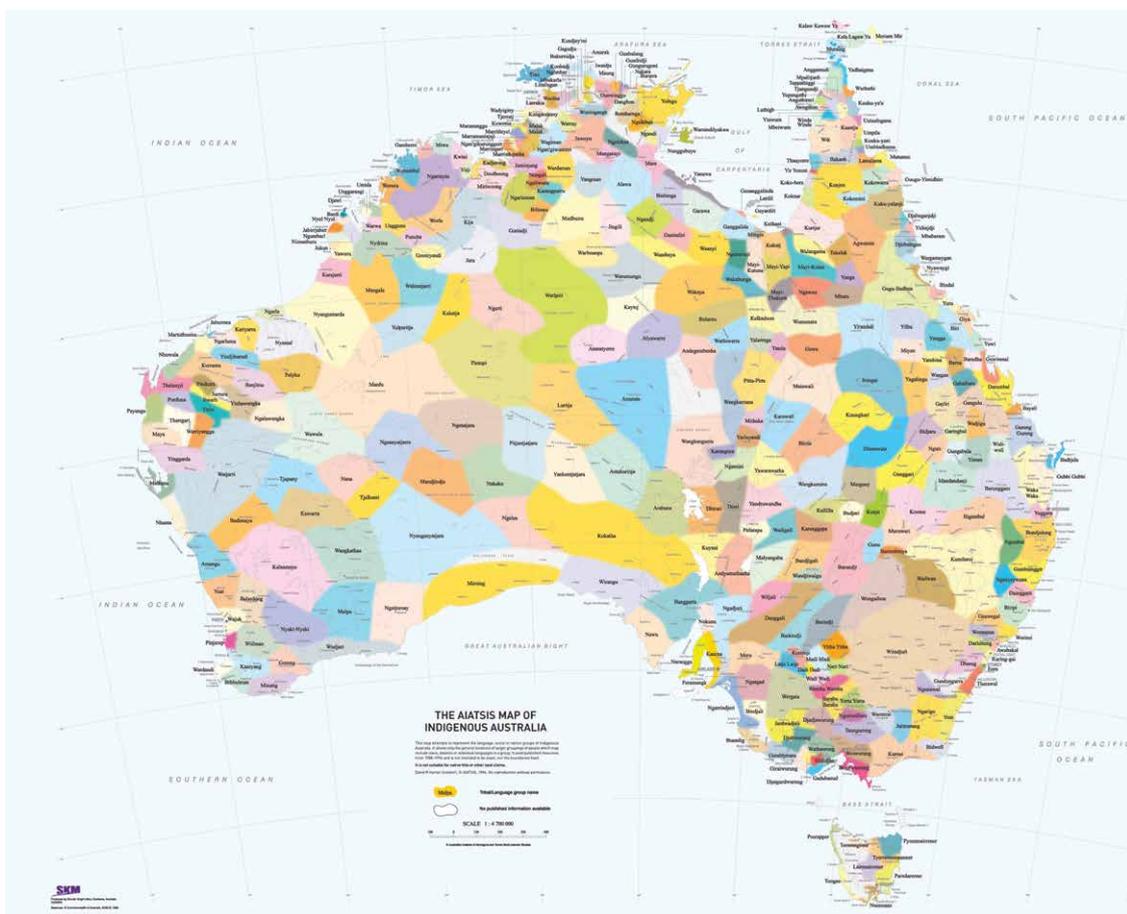
In November 2019, AIATSIS along with representatives from the Gangalidda and Garawa Nations travelled to Manchester, United Kingdom (UK) to collect 18 objects. Nyamal representatives nominated AIATSIS to act on their behalf. An official handover of the material was held at Australia House, London. AIATSIS 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. 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 (NSW). 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 Aranda and AIATSIS Repatriation Partnership

The Aranda people are the owners of the central desert region of Australia. Their Country includes the areas and surrounding lands of “...Mount Gosse, Mount Zeil, and Mount Heughlin; on the Finke River to Idracowra, Blood Creek, Macumba, Mount Dare, and Andado, and some distance east into the sandhills of the Arunta (Simpson) Desert; northeast to Intea on the lower Hale River, thence north to Ilbala on Plenty River; west to Inilja and Hart Range, Mount Swan, Gillen Creek, Connor Well, and Narwietooma; in Central MacDonnell, James, and Ooraminna Ranges” (Tindale 1974:220-221). Although they are one people, Aranda associate themselves with the region of Country they are from; therefore, there are Western, Eastern and Central Aranda and each has its own dialect, ceremonies and customs. Aranda also have many ceremonies and stories they share between the regional groups.³



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/>

³ As all the materials returned to the Aranda from ISM and MM are secret sacred restricted men’s objects, there is no discussion of the nature of the material in this report.

Aranda Material Held at the Illinois State Museum

The Aranda material at the ISM was acquired in 1942 via a loan from the Department of Anthropology at the University of Chicago (UC). This loan was facilitated by Prof. Fay Cooper Cole, Chairman and founder of the UC Anthropology Department. The Aranda material was one portion of a considerable collection of Australian Aboriginal material, originating from at least five communities from across Australia. When displayed the objects sought to illustrate the variation in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage material.

After the initial discussions with ISM, Dr Brooke M. Morgan (Curator of Anthropology at ISM's Research & Collections Center) and Claire Martin (Research Associate at ISM's Research & Collections Center) undertook research at the UC to better understand the provenance of the entire ISM collection. It is possible Prof. Alfred Radcliffe-Brown acquired the material during his appointment at the University of Sydney (1925–1931) and brought it with him to UC when he took up the position as head of the Anthropology Department (1931–1937) (see UCL). Despite ISM's and AIATSIS' research, the field collector of the Aranda material remains unknown.

Aranda Material Held at the Manchester Museum

The Aranda material held at MM was acquired from three sources: Spencer and Gillen, F. Wood-Jones and a Mrs Melland.

The combined research of Walter Baldwin Spencer and Francis James Gillen from their extended relationship with the Aranda people produced one of the founding documents of Australian anthropology, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* 1899 (Petch 2000:314). The Aranda material collected by Spencer and Gillen returned from MM was registered by the Museum on the 6th of March 1903. By this time Gillen had been living on Aranda Country for more than 25 years; however, he had only started conducting research with Spencer in 1896. The pair's largest expedition prior to 1903 was in 1901–1902, and is likely this is when the material was collected.

The Aranda material donated by Frederic Wood-Jones to MM was part of a much larger donation registered on the 31st of May 1938. Wood-Jones was a very active collector of Aboriginal artefacts in Australia between 1920 and 1938. He held a chair at the University of Adelaide from 1919 to 1926, where he established a museum, and was active in the Royal Society of South Australia (RSSA) and participated in preliminary expeditions with the University of Adelaide Board for Anthropological Research (BAR) (which he founded in 1926). Later he held a chair at the University of Melbourne from 1930 to 1938. Wood-Jones brought the material to MM while he held the Chair of Anatomy at the University of Manchester between 1938 and 1945.

There is currently no information to indicate Wood-Jones personally collected material from Aranda Country; however he was involved with the BAR and the RSSA who funded various expeditions into Aranda Country by N.B. Tindale, who was accompanied by researchers including, R.H. Pulleine: H.K. Fry, T.D. Campbell, C.J. Hackett, J.H. Gray, H.M. Hale, Wilkinson, F. Fenner and L. Wilkie among others (see SA Museum Record Series AA 122, AA 338, AA 346/03). During this time, one expedition was also undertaken by H. Kramer to Aranda Country, also under the RSSA. Collection records indicate material was acquired during some of these expeditions, as many of the researchers, such as Campbell, were prolific collectors (see SA Museum Record Series AA 52/01). This material was brought to the University of Adelaide Museum among other collecting institutions. It is understood Wood-Jones brought a selection of Aranda material from one or more of these expeditions as well as other Aboriginal material with him to the MM upon taking up the Chair of Anatomy in 1938.

Mrs Melland, according to the MM's 'O Register', donated the object to MM on the 31st of September after "travelling south to north through Alice Springs". The RoCH project team was unable to find further information about Mrs Melland.

Developing the Repatriation Requests With Aranda

AIATSIS partnered with the Senior Aranda Loremen to develop two repatriation requests, one for ISM and another for MM. For ease, the research with Aranda about the ISM and MM material was undertaken simultaneously.

The initial research phase was undertaken in collaboration with Shaun Angeles, who at the time was Aranda Artwe-kenhe (Men's) Collection Researcher with the Strehlow Research Centre (SRC), and now the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory's Cultural Repatriation Manager. In the initial repatriation meeting on the 7th of March 2019, AIATSIS staff members Christopher Simpson and Iain Johnston reviewed the material in the ISM and MM collection with Shaun and Winston Green, a Pintubi man and repatriation officer at SRC. The purpose of this research phase was to do a first pass of the material and to develop an appropriate strategy where the Aranda Senior Loremen could investigate and research the material.

A subsequent planning discussion occurred on the 7th of June 2019 in Canberra, between Christopher, Shaun and a small group of Aranda Loremen, including Alan Drover, Braydon Kanjira, Cleophas 'Lofty' Katakarinja and Jonathon 'JJ' Conway. This meeting occurred while the Aranda Loremen were undertaking research into the T.G.H Strehlow collection at the National Film and Sound Archive. In this meeting the men discussed the repatriation process and the best way forward for Aranda to collectively make a decision about whether to request the repatriation of the material. The sacredness of the material required Senior Loremen, Loremen and apprentice Loremen from each of the three Aranda groups (Western, Eastern and Central) to be in attendance to make a decision.

Christopher and Jason Lyons, AIATSIS staff members, met with 17 Senior Loremen, Loremen and apprentice Loremen from Eastern, Western and Central Aranda at the SRC between the 22nd and 24th of July 2019. Because of the significance of the material, consent had to be granted by the Senior Loremen to enable Christopher and Jason to discuss and learn about the objects. Consent was granted for Christopher and Jason based on the following reasons:

- They were culturally competent;
- They had previously lived and worked in Central Australia; and
- Their participation would enable them to understand the importance of the material to the Aranda.

The significance of this meeting was stressed by Shaun, who explained a meeting of this many Senior Loremen, Loremen and ceremonial leaders from each Aranda group had not happened for at least five years. Shaun also explained the meeting provided an opportunity for the Senior Loremen to discuss Aranda's collective attitude to the repatriation of overseas secret sacred objects.

This meeting was facilitated by AIATSIS and SRC, and was chaired by Braydon, Aranda Loreman. During the meeting, the Aranda Loremen systematically investigated and discussed the photographs of material (and the associated data) in the ISM's and MM's collections to decide which items were Aranda and should be requested for repatriation. At the conclusion of this meeting, the Aranda Loremen authorised AIATSIS to submit a repatriation request to ISM and MM for their material on their behalf. The Aranda men nominated Braydon and Lofty to travel to ISM to collect their material and Mark Inkamala and JJ to travel to MM, if the requests were successful.

Following the meeting on the 25th of July 2019, AIATSIS facilitated a telephone conference between some of the Aranda Loremen and Stephen Welsh, Curator of Living Cultures at Manchester Museum, to discuss the Aranda material, its importance to the Aranda, and the return request.

The official requests were submitted to ISM and MM on the 9th of August 2019 and the 30th of August, respectively. The repatriation request was assessed by ISM's Board of Directors on the 9th of September 2019 and was unanimously accepted. One ISM board member wrote to Brooke:

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.

The MM repatriation request was assessed by The University of Manchester's Board of Governors on the 2nd of October 2019 and was also unanimously accepted. The external repatriation request reviewer, a requirement of MM's repatriation policy, Dr Emma Martin, Senior Curator of Ethnology National Museums Liverpool, wrote:

Reviewing the repatriation claim and the research provenance documents it is clear that the claim to ownership has been proven and that there are no competing claims against the objects selected for return. With this in mind, I fully endorse the request for the return of these objects to the originating communities in Australia.



The Senior Aranda Loremen, Loremen and apprentice Loremen as well as Christopher Simpson Director of the RoCH project at the Strelhow Research Centre.

On behalf of the Senior Ceremonial Leaders of Central Australia and beyond, I am very happy to hear and see that the artefacts will be coming back to their original beds and caves, where they will sleep for the rest of their time. Their return will bring back power and strength to our Dreamtime constitution. The men of the desert will be very grateful for the objects returning back home.

Braydon Kanjira, Aranda Senior Ceremonial Leader

AIATSIS' Work with the Illinois State and Manchester Museums

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 repatriate material 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 repatriation process. On advice from the Senior Aranda Loremen 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 met with the ISM's staff to discuss the potential repatriation and received positive assurances that the Director would recommend to the ISM's Board of Directors to repatriate the material upon receiving a request. Shortly after Lyndall's visit, ISM also confirmed they were legally able to repatriate material from their collection, a crucial step to returning the material to the Aranda.

After the ISM Board of Directors approved the request on the 9th of September 2019, AIATSIS started working in earnest with ISM to prepare the material for repatriation. As the Aranda 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.

AIATSIS began working with MM in late 2018, when the Institute wrote to the Museum to inform them of the RoCH project. In February 2019, AIATSIS followed up on this correspondence to confirm if the MM would be willing to consider a request to repatriate material to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia. Stephen Welsh responded explaining MM was 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.

After The University of Manchester's Board of Governors approved the request (2/10/2019), AIATSIS started working in earnest with MM to prepare the material for repatriation. As the Aranda material is secret sacred men's business, MM had only male staff members create the storage boxes for the safe and secure transportation of the material.

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.⁴ IAS has extensive experience in handling sensitive and fragile freight, an understanding of the complex nature of the repatriation process and has 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.

⁴ International Art Services (IAS) Logistics is a Supply Nation certified business.

6 The Journey to Collect Aranda Material From the Illinois State Museum

Braydon Kanjira and Lofty Katakarinja left Alice Springs on the 18th of October 2019. They travelled from central Australia to Illinois, USA over three days, accompanied by Christopher Simpson and Jason Lyons of AIATSIS. On the repatriation journey were two delegates from the Bardi Jawi Nation – Russell Davey and Robert Wiggan, who also travelled to ISM to collect their material (see Johnston *et al.* 2020).

Braydon and Lofty were welcomed to Illinois by Logan Pappenfort, 2nd Chief Peoria Tribe, the First Nation of Illinois on Monday 21st of October 2019. At the welcome, they met with ISM's staff, including the Director, Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko. The next day Braydon and Lofty first saw the Aranda material and had private time with the objects in order to make sure everything was ready for their safe transportation home.



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

On Wednesday 23rd of October, Braydon and Lofty performed a smoking ceremony for the ISM staff to cleanse them as they had come in contact with the secret sacred men's objects. Braydon and Lofty were supported by Cate Mascari from the Australian Consulate-General Chicago. Cate acquired the gum leaves and assisted with the ceremony at the request of Braydon and Lofty.



Braydon Kanjira (top) and Cleophas 'Lofty' Katakarija (bottom) demonstrate the procedure for being covered with smoke to the Illinois State Museum's staff.

The same day an official handover ceremony took place where Braydon and Lofty took custodianship of the material on behalf of Aranda and ISM officially deaccessioned the material from their collection. Dignitaries at the handover event included David Bushby, Australia's Consul-General in Chicago, and George Godfrey of the Potawatomi Nation. Braydon spoke on behalf of the Aranda people about the importance of culture, repatriation and having this material return home. The significance of the handover event was felt in Australia and the USA. In the USA, stories ran on National Public Radio, The Illinois Times and Fox News; in Australia, the ABC, Guardian and NewsCorp also ran stories. The words of Braydon were published around the world:

We are very proud to represent the Aranda Nation and we feel more powerful knowing the material is coming home. Our community is excited and we are looking forward to having a celebration when the material is back on Country.

IAS Logistics ensured the material was handled in a culturally appropriate manner and Braydon and Lofty oversaw the final packing of the material before it was transported in a cargo plane to Australia. In accordance with Aranda culture, a ceremony was conducted to acknowledge the end of the day's proceedings and the material's stay at ISM. Braydon and Lofty spoke about the importance of the material returning to Aranda 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.



Braydon Kanjira receiving a gift from Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko to symbolise the return of the Aranda material at the official handover ceremony. The AIATSIS delegation and David Bushby, Consul-General of Australia in Chicago, sit beside him.

The Material Returning to Australia

The Aranda material landed safely in Sydney and was welcomed to Eora Country by Aunty Lola Ryan of the Dharawal people, La Perouse, on the 4th of November 2019. From Sydney the material was flown to Alice Springs.

...it's a great idea to bring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander material home. I feel really excited for the Aranda and Bardi Jawi people that their material is being returned. It's wonderful that cultural heritage material has been preserved and it's time these items were returned to their traditional owners.

Aunty Lola Ryan, Dharawal people of La Perouse



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

Return Home to Aranda Country

A small private men's only handover ceremony was held at the SRC to mark the final journey home of the Aranda material from ISM. Many Aranda Senior Loremen, Loremen and apprentice Loremen attended the ceremony, as did Christopher Simpson and the Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP, Minister for Indigenous Australians.

The Hon Ken Wyatt said of the return ceremony:

The return of these culturally significant objects signifies an important moment of healing for these communities. Importantly, it demonstrates... [our] commitment to work with cultural authority from throughout Australia to preserve our unique Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and provides all Australians with the opportunity to learn about the significance of these objects through truth-telling and to gain a greater understanding of our nation's shared history.

Braydon Kanjira also spoke at the ceremony:

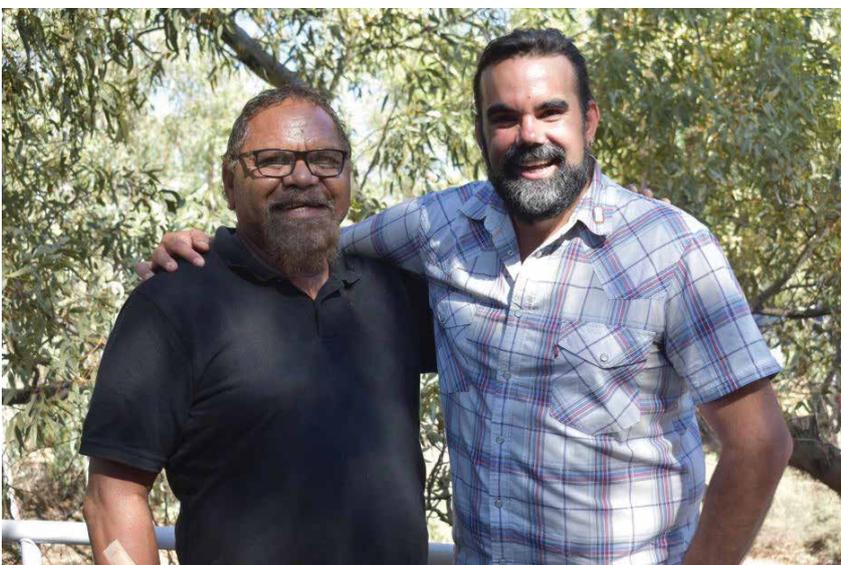
It's good they've come back and can now rest forever. To us, it means a lot, to the Aranda tribe ... it was emotional, really, really emotional, I can't find the words to describe it, how we felt about our artefacts being here, back home in central Australia. We already know about the songs of the artefacts, they're going to be restored for our future generations, we will be talking to our grandsons about the artefacts, but in a public way.

I experienced the same feeling when I travelled to America to bring our artefacts home, it's the start of getting artefacts back from around the world, and it's the beginning.

Although it was a private event at the request of the Senior Aranda Loremen, the ceremony demonstrated to those in attendance the importance of returning cultural heritage material to Country.



Aranda Senior Loremen, Loremen and apprentice Loremen with the Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP at the small private men's only handover ceremony at the Strelhow Research Centre.



Western Aranda ceremonial leader Braydon Kanjira with Christopher Simpson, Director celebrated the repatriation in Alice Springs. Photograph courtesy of Katrina Beavan, 783 ABC Alice Springs.

7 Returning the Aranda Material From Manchester Museum

Manchester Museum and the Impact of COVID-19 on the RoCH Project

The (COVID-19) global pandemic had a massive impact upon Australia and the world in 2020, with implications to RoCH project work and travel arrangements being felt from March 2020. After much consultation, Jonathan Conway and Mark Inkamala chose not to travel to MM in March 2020 to collect their material. Owing to the global pandemic and following consultations with Aranda and MM, AIATSIS decided to cancel the delegation to Manchester. With approval from the Senior Aranda Loremen, Stephen Walsh and his team packed the material and IAS Logistics safely transported it to Australia.

AIATSIS was unable to return the Aranda material to Country within the timeframe of the RoCH project because of border restrictions put in place during the pandemic. With approval from Senior Aranda Loremen, AIATSIS arranged for the temporary storage of the material in IAS Logistics' climate controlled facility in Mascot, NSW. The material will be returned to Aranda Country when it is safe to do so, most likely late 2020.

Further Impacts of COVID-19 on the RoCH Project

A further 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 for 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.

8 The Significance of the Aranda Material Coming Home

...We've got to remember that all those ancient artefacts or objects have a life force themselves. They have agency. So it's important for us [repatriation researchers and practitioners], not only to think about the return of these things from our [anthropological] point of view, but we need to be thinking of the wellbeing of those ancestors [the artefacts]; all those ancestors that got spread out all over the earth, all throughout the world. When I think about that, it makes me feel sorry for all those ancestors, whether it be the ancestral remains of our old people, whether it be those objects that are the embodiment of our creation ancestors. When I think about the thousands of individual ancestors that have been removed from their place of origin, their Country, and they've been locked up, literally locked up in dark, dusty cupboards of museum institutions and private collections. Well I think about their wellbeing and their wellbeing is suffering. We [Aranda] know that they have life force and when you think like that, when you start to feel sorry for all those ancestors that have been removed, and when you can look upon ancestor or objects as having life and spirit and essence, well then, it's a sad story. I really hope that we have some successes in this project because the benefits are just beautiful, wonderful, and honest.

Shaun Angeles, Cultural Repatriation Manager, MAGNT

Shaun provided this statement very early in the RoCH project, prior to Aranda being approached as a partner, when he was interviewed as a member of the project's Advisory Committee. He articulated the deep spiritual importance of returning Aranda cultural material to Country, for the RoCH project the material he is describing includes the vast majority of objects returned from MM. As Shaun explained, this material is the embodiment of Aranda's Creation Ancestors and cannot be properly looked after anywhere but on Aranda Country and under the custodianship of the Aranda people.

Returning the material will restore our culture and strengthen community. Young people need to learn about culture and bringing back the material will help us do this. The return of the material will let us reconnect it to Country. It will also help us preserve our culture and pass knowledge onto the young people.

Mark Inkamala, Senior Aranda Man

The Aranda Senior Loremen explained early in our partnership returning the material from ISM and MM was important in order to teach their younger Loremen and future generations about culture. They explained the material will assist them to pass on their knowledge and Lore and maintain Aranda culture. This sentiment was repeated by Braydon Kanjira and Mark Inkamala during the repatriation process. When analysing the Aranda material, the Loremen shared how many of the objects which came home are connected through ceremonial cycles and each contains knowledge for different stages of the ceremony to inform participants about different parts of Aranda Country, Lore and knowledge. Shaun lamented the ceremonies the Senior Loremen described have not happened for a long time and Aranda only have five to ten years before the Knowledge Holders who participated in or have memories of these ceremonies will pass. This is why he and other Aranda researchers are working with those Senior Loremen and Elders to record and pass on this knowledge. For Shaun and the other Loremen the return of this material is invaluable in this endeavour. The material represents one of the last tangible links to Aranda Ancestors, past practices and cultural knowledge regarding significant Aranda ceremonies. The return of the material from ISM and MM provides an important mechanism for the intergenerational transfer of knowledge to ensure these significant ceremonies are revived, maintained and practiced by future Aranda generations.

In discussion with Shaun, he contextualised the return of cultural material within the larger discourse of reconciliation and Indigenous empowerment in Australia.

...getting our cultural heritage material is empowerment. It is all around empowering Aboriginal people. Over the last 250 years there's been a massive disempowerment of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people all over the country, right throughout Australia. A lot of it was to do with the taking away of our important cultural heritage which now lies in numerous institutions all over the world. So that empowerment aspect is why this project is really important. When you've got Indigenous people struggling, it reflects upon the whole health and wellbeing of a nation. I think that empowerment of Aboriginal people, ultimately empowers non-indigenous as well. When you have a healthy First Nations people, well that's just going to mean a healthier nation, a healthier community; healthier dialogue, healthier perspectives upon one another...It's a really good news story for the whole world.

AIATSIS' research supports and facilitates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural resurgence in ways which shape the national narrative for all Australians. For those directly involved in the RoCH project it was also very significant as explained by Christopher Simpson:

Delivering the RoCH project is an extremely culturally grounding and humbling experience. Witnessing senior men sharing stories, holding these items, listening and singing to these items and seeing their spirit being revitalised by having these items home is something I will never forget. Returning items not only brings hope to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples but it also brings hope to First Nations people all over the world to have these items returned home to where they belong, to keep the stories going and to keep culture strong.

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 Katakarinja 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 objects, 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 Loremen in each community will use the objects in ceremony and to teach young men about their history. The ISM is honoured to have cared for the objects for over seven decades and to be among the first to work with AIATSIS to return them home.

The Significance of the Return for Manchester Museum

This section was contributed by Ms Esme Ward, Director of MM, and Stephen Welsh, Curator of Living Cultures and Honorary Research Fellow in Social Anthropology at the MM.

Like many museums we have been active in returning ancestral human remains to their communities of origin since 2003, but this marked the first return of secret sacred and ceremonial material to Australia's First Nations peoples. The other distinguishing factor was the unconditional nature of the repatriation (without conditions or limitations). It did not move the objects from one institution to another, but instead fully acknowledged that Aboriginal people have the primary and sole right to the ownership and control of all forms of their heritage. I believe that repatriation shifts the processes, language and thinking of the past towards a context of possibility and action for the future.

Esme Ward, Director of MM

The unconditional repatriation allowed us to further challenge, disrupt and transform western colonial modes of curation, which were established to analyse, catalogue, display and preserve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage in isolation and without consent from Australia's First Nations peoples. It facilitated a deeper understanding of how such practices continue to inflict loss, trauma and exclusion on those Traditional Owners and places most intimately connected with secret sacred and ceremonial objects. The trust that has been built will only encourage a deepening commitment to healing, reconciliation and inclusion.

Stephen Welsh, Curator of Living Cultures and Honorary Research Fellow
in Social Anthropology at the MM

9 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 Aranda 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 Aranda story. Equally, the return of the creation ancestors embodied in those objects ensures they'll be looked after, sung to and held by the Aranda men now and in the future.

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