AIATSIS Treasures on Display for NAIDOC Tour

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) opened its doors to ten lucky members of the public for a ‘behind the scenes’ tour of its priceless collections and preservation work during NAIDOC Week.

The five 666 ABC Canberra radio listeners and their invited guests, won a ‘behind the scenes’ tour by submitting their own stories of family self-discovery in a competition to highlight NAIDOC Week.

The group enjoyed a bush tucker morning tea of emu and kangaroo pies and rosella flower jam with wattle seed scones before being treated to a tour normally reserved for visiting dignitaries and special interest groups.

AIATSIS Principal, Russell Taylor welcomed the group with a promise the tour would make for a memorable NAIDOC Week.

“AIATSIS is the national keeping place of Australia’s Indigenous cultural heritage, intrinsic to our national identity,” Mr Taylor said.

“It is with great pride that we collect and preserve the art, artifacts, video and audio recordings housed in our vaults. It is not too often we have the opportunity to share these items with the general public and I thank ABC Canberra for their fantastic support.”

What was meant to be a 90-minute tour took close to two and a half hours, as the group were enthralled and engaged by the diverse collections and activities.

Some treasures on display included a 1982 self-portrait by Eddie Mabo and the shield featuring the boomerang totem of the Gu:na:ni (Kunjen) people which was adopted as the Institute’s logo.

Tour participant, Jenny Tomkins said she felt really privileged to see some of the wonderful treasures of the Institute and to meet the enthusiastic staff.

“We really appreciated the effort staff took to display and explain some of the amazing books, recordings, art and artifacts, and demonstrate the work they do. We were really impressed by some of the illustrations in the very old books, and the words of Bennelong,” Jenny said.

Marketing Manager for 666 ABC Canberra, Tracey Butler said the ABC team was thankful to AIATSIS for sharing parts of the collection with listeners.

“We are thrilled we could share some of AIATSIS most prized treasures with a small group of our listeners in person during NAIDOC Week 2014.”

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