AIATSIS collection

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages — Resource guide

This resource guide aims to support school communities in identifying, accessing, documenting and researching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. It refers to language, cultural, historical and genealogical materials held within the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) that could be used as part of language revival processes.

AIATSIS is the peak institution for collecting, researching and publishing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. Their collections include historical and original items as well as published materials and audio-visual articles pertaining to a broad range of topics, including language, culture, history and genealogy.

Note: AIATSIS provide their own Information Guides and Fact Sheets which give more specific details on services and activities. This guide supplements them by providing a targeted overview. The AIATSIS documents are available on their website and associated pages, at <www.aiatsis.gov.au>.

AIATSIS areas

There are several areas within AIATSIS with activities and/or collections of interest to schools and communities, including the following:

Research Program: AIATSIS is responsible for a multitude of research programs and services, and numerous partnerships with research institutions and Indigenous regional alliances, communities and individuals. Further details: www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/about.html

Native Title Research Unit: This unit provides high quality independent research and policy advice to promote the recognition and protection of the native title of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Further details: www.aiatsis.gov.au/ntru/overview.html

Audiovisual Archive: The archive holds field recordings documenting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, ceremonies, music, oral history, cultural narratives, site descriptions, research seminars and important events. Further details: www.aiatsis.gov.au/collections/ava.html

Library: The library's role is to develop, maintain and preserve well-documented collections and to provide the best possible access to its collection to clients, both in person (the library is located in Canberra) and remotely via the Internet. Further details: www.aiatsis.gov.au/collections/library.html

Aboriginal Studies Press: This is the publishing arm of AIATSIS, publishing writing with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and lifestyles. Further details: www.aiatsis.gov.au/asp/about.html

Research at AIATSIS

Return of materials to Indigenous clients

AIATSIS has a proactive policy of returning materials to Indigenous communities. For example, the Audiovisual Archive has provided free copies of audio recordings, video recordings and photographs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients through its Return of Material to Indigenous Clients (ROMTIC) program.

Further details: www.aiatsis.gov.au/ava/romtic.html

Mura AIATSIS catalogue

Mura enables individuals to research the AIATSIS collection of print, moving images, sound recordings and photographic materials relating to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories. There may be access conditions relating to some items in the collection that impact on access, copying and other terms – these have been set by the Indigenous Community and/or the Depositor. Registration is free and includes the capacity for personalised search preferences, 'tagging' and access to external databases.

Further details, including online access to Mura: www.aiatsis.gov.au/collections/muraread.html

Languages at AIATSIS

AIATSIS has an extensive collection of language materials and resources in various formats: print, including language maps, audio-visual, including recorded sounds and moving images, and a web-based database. These items are best found on *Mura* using the AIATSIS Language Thesaurus to identify keywords for searches.

Further details: http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/language.html

AIATSIS thesauri

The AIATSIS thesauri webpage is an ideal starting point for language research as it outlines the codes and other descriptors used within the AIATSIS catalogue. The headings are used by a range of collecting institutions (libraries, museums, etc.) to categorise and identify place names, language groups and people, as well as subjects relating to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.

Further details, including electronic (PDF) versions of the thesauri: www1.aiatsis.gov.au/thesaurus/

AIATSIS language bibliographies

These PDF bibliographies outline print materials in the collections relating to specific languages. They are a valuable source of language materials for school-communities, and include historical and contemporary items ranging from rare books to manuscripts and pamphlets, as well as electronic media such as microform and CD-ROM.

Further details: www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/languagebibs.html

Online language resources

In addition to print and media items in the collection, AIATSIS also has a range of online resources relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, including the following:

- **Language bibliographies** — print resources held at AIATSIS for over 150 languages

- **AUSTLANG** — a web-based Australian Indigenous language database that assembles information from various sources. AUSTLANG enables users to search for a language or place name or to navigate via a Google map, to locate information about languages.

- **ASEDA** (Aboriginal Studies Electronic Data Archive) — is a catalogue of language materials including dictionaries, word lists, and grammars of about 300 languages, some of which are available online. Copies of all materials may be requested; check access and copyright conditions.

- **OZBIB** — a bibliography, compiled in 2005, of published and unpublished works on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages held by the AIATSIS Library's Australian Languages Collection <www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/languages.html>.

Further details: www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/language.html

Indigenous Languages Unit

In 2010, AIATSIS established an Indigenous Languages Unit to research language-related matters and manage several language projects.

Further details: www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/expression.html

AIATSIS finding aids

AIATSIS has also developed a number of **finding aids** to enhance access to collections. These aids provide background details and other information relating to the collection item. For example, there are finding aids available for:

- manuscripts: www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/msfa.html

- audio/sound recordings: www.aiatsis.gov.au/ava/findingaid/SearchResults.asp

- moving images: www.aiatsis.gov.au/ava/MovingImage/mifa.html

Indexes and databases

This webpage lists external databases relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

Further details: www.aiatsis.gov.au/library/databases.html

Online exhibitions

AIATSIS hosts a range of online exhibitions, including materials from the collection which have been digitised and made available online. Topics/themes for online exhibitions include Family History; Stolen Generations; NAIDOC; Fighting for Rights; Languages and Indigenous Studies. Further details: www.aiatsis.gov.au/collections/exhibitions.html

Collectors of words

This is an online exhibition that features language materials collected by EM Curr and RB Smyth during the 1870s and 1880s. Curr's work, particularly his word lists compiled from locations across Queensland, will be of interest to Queensland school communities. It is acknowledged that

these wordlists are historical and were collected/transcribed by a range of individuals such as pastoralists, policemen and magistrates, hence there may be some inaccuracies in linguistic content; nevertheless they are a useful record which could serve as a starting point in documenting language. Further: www1.aiatsis.gov.au/exhibitions/languages/sensitivity.html

Family History Unit

Due to recent funding and program changes, the AIATSIS Family History Unit is now funded to provide services to Link-Up staff only and is unable to undertake research for the public. AIATSIS has an extensive collection of materials relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and a range of research tools, fact sheets and other self-help guides to support individual research.

- **Family History Kit** — includes fact sheets, guides to family history resources, Tindale genealogies and websites. These resources provide researchers with general information on where and how to start researching family history and contact details for relevant organisations. Further: www.aiatsis.gov.au/fhu/kit.html

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Biographical Index** (ABI) — an online personal name index to published material held in the AIATSIS Library. The ABI indexes materials in the AIATSIS catalogues including:

    - books: local histories, personal and family histories

    - journals: current publications such as *Deadly Vibe* and *Torres News*; Ceased publications: *Dawn* and *New Dawn*, *Australian Evangel*, *Identity*, *The Lutheran*, the *Australian Board of Missions Review* and the *Newsletter for the Aboriginal People of Victoria*

    - state government reports, including Protector's Reports

    - manuscripts, including name lists as indicated in the catalogue.

    Further details on the ABI: www.aiatsis.gov.au/fhu/abi.html

School communities may use AIATSIS family history resources to explore community and family histories of the local/regional area.

Further details on the Family History Unit can be found at www.aiatsis.gov.au/fhu/about.html

Native Title Research Unit

The AIATSIS Native Title Research Unit (NTRU) facilitates access to the Institute's records, materials and collections and publishes the results of research both as a source of public information and academic publication. The NTRU conducts research, hosts events as well as disseminating resources including reports and publications on matters pertaining to Native Title.

Further details on the Native Title Research Unit can be found at: www.aiatsis.gov.au/ntru/overview.html

More information

Please email langtrial@qsa.qld.edu.au, phone (07) 3864 0310 or visit the QSA website <www.qsa.qld.edu.au> and search for "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages".