

Centre for Museums, Heritage & Material Culture Studies Occasional Seminar Series 2008

Date : October 2, 2008

Occasional Seminar Series - Autumn 2008

Date: Tuesday October 7th, 4.30 - 6.00pm

Speaker: Steve Hemming, Flinders University, Australia

Title: Repatriating the 'Old People': implications for Ngarrindjeri community development, research and wellbeing

Venue

Institute of Archaeology, Gordon Square, Seminar Room 209 (second floor) followed by drinks reception in Room 609

Abstract

In 2006 the Ngarrindjeri nation launched the Ngarrindjeri Nation Yarluwar-Ruwe Plan: Caring for Ngarrindjeri Sea Country and Culture (2006) as a strategic response to new government planning regimes. The Yarluwar-Ruwe Plan has been formally acknowledged as a foundational document for all new government natural resource management planning in the lower Murray River region in South Australia. It identifies amongst its strategies and priority actions the need to: 'Negotiate secure burial grounds for repatriated Old People throughout Ngarrindjeri Ruwe. [and] Work with all levels of Government to determine the most appropriate legal method for protecting burial grounds in perpetuity'. Along with this 'rights based' approach, the Plan identifies a broader program of building Ngarrindjeri expertise, capacity and employment opportunities as fundamental to a just resolution of issues such as the repatriation and reburial of Ngarrindjeri 'Old People' (human remains). The recently formalized Ngarrindjeri Regional Partnership agreement between the

Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority and the South Australian and Federal governments aims to support the further development of a Ngarrindjeri Caring for Country Program with responsibility for issues such as reburial programs. The repatriation of Old People is a first step in the process of repairing the damage done to Indigenous nations such as the Ngarrindjeri by the desecration of burial grounds and the scientific acquisition of human remains. Supporting developing programs such as Ngarrindjeri Caring for Country provides critical recognition of the potential of repatriation and reburial to contribute to lasting improvements to Indigenous wellbeing. This is at a time in Australian history when Indigenous leaders and non-Indigenous governments are desperately looking for long-term strategies aimed at improving Indigenous economic and social indicators.

Bio-note

Steve Hemming is a senior lecturer in Australian Studies at Flinders University. He also teaches into the Indigenous Studies program run by Yunggorendi First Nations Centre (Flinders University). During the 1980s and 1990s he was a curator in history and anthropology at the South Australian Museum. He has had a long-term, collaborative research relationship with the Ngarrindjeri nation and more recently this has included a focus on the nexus between cultural heritage and natural resource management, economic development and governance. He is interested in strategic teaching and research partnerships between industry, the university sector and Indigenous nations. His most recent publications include collaborative pieces: 'Reconciliation? Culture, Nature and the River Murray' and 'Justice, Culture and Economy for the Ngarrindjeri Nation' in *Fresh Water: New Perspectives on Water in Australia* (2007), Melbourne University Press and 'Listening and Respecting Across Generations and Beyond Borders: The Ancient One and Kumarangk (Hindmarsh Island)' in *Perspectives on the Ancient One* (2008), Left Coast Press.

For more information: www.mhm.ucl.ac.uk