



**AIATSIS**

# **Wayinyjarri-nha (came back) Return of Cultural Heritage to Yindjibarndi**

**Return of Cultural Heritage program**

**Tamarind Meara**



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AIATSIS acknowledges and thanks the Yindjibarndi Nation and Christine and Ian Tremain.

**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

In 2020, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) established the Return of Cultural Heritage (RoCH) program to return Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage material held overseas to Australia. The program supports Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander peoples to affirm sovereignty and their custodianship of their cultural heritage material held overseas and to make decisions about where and how it can be best looked after in the present.

In July 2020, AIATSIS was approached by, and partnered with, family representatives of Mr Fred Schelling to return eight secular objects to the Yindjibarndi people of the Pilbara, Western Australia (WA). The return marked the first return under the newly extended RoCH program and the first from a private collector since the program's inception.

This report describes the partnership, collaborative research and the successful return of Yindjibarndi material to Country. It also demonstrates how the return of cultural heritage material strengthens communities and culture, and promotes reconciliation and healing.

## Acronyms

Acronyms	Definition
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
IAS	IAS Logistics, a Supply Nation certified business
RoCH	Return of Cultural Heritage
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
WA	Western Australia
YAC	Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation

## Key terms and definitions

Key terms	Definition
Collecting institution	Organisation or institution which holds and cares for all forms of cultural heritage material, i.e. galleries, libraries, archives, museums and universities.
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 program, all forms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage material, including but not limited to objects, audio visual, artwork and documentary records (in either physical or digital form).
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.
Native Title Representative Bodies, Aboriginal Corporations, Native Title Representative Bodies, Native Title Service Providers	<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned corporations or peak bodies and organisations that represent or work with, or for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</p> <p>Please note: Many of these terms also have specific meanings, i.e. Native title representative bodies (NTRBs) and native title service providers (NTSPs) assist native title claimants and holders to make an application to have their native title recognised under the <i>Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)</i>. NTRB/SPs also support the ongoing management of native title rights and interests through agreement making and future act functions.</p>
Traditional Owners	Members of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community.
Return	Includes the unconditional (e.g. repatriation) and conditional (e.g. loans) return of cultural material to an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander individual, community or organisation.

## Acknowledgements

This report would not have been possible without the generous support and contributions of Michael Woodley, CEO Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation (YAC) and Phil Davies, YAC Culture. We would also like to acknowledge the contribution of Christine and Ian Tremain for reaching out and contacting AIATSIS. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the time, support and hard work of Ingrid Button and Doug Walker of IAS Logistics, Ngaarda Media and all AIATSIS staff members who contributed to this return, especially Natasha Wainberg and Rose Rutherford.

All mistakes and errors are our own.

The AIATSIS RoCH program is proudly supported by the National Indigenous Australians Agency.



**Australian Government**

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**National Indigenous Australians Agency**

## Partners

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



**Australian  
BORDER FORCE**

# 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. AIATSIS conducts research to the highest ethical standards, directly benefiting the communities we work with. The Institute's partnerships span the globe, including government, academic, corporate, cultural and community sectors. Its unique and dynamic convergence of knowledge, resources and expertise enables AIATSIS 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* (Cwth) (AIATSIS Act).

They are:

- to develop, preserve and provide access to a national collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage
- to use that national collection to strengthen and promote knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage
- to provide leadership in the fields of:
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research
  - ethics and protocols for research, and other activities relating to collections, related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
  - use (including use for research) of that national collection and other collections containing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures 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
- to provide advice to the Commonwealth on the situation and status of Aboriginal and Torres Straits 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.***

## Return of Cultural Heritage program

For over 250 years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage has been removed from Country and placed in museums, universities, and private collections. With funding from the Australian Government, AIATSIS is leading the RoCH program to return Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage material held overseas to Australia. Returning material to Country for the purpose of cultural maintenance and revitalisation is a key aspiration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and strengthens the signal both to the nation and globally that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are respected, celebrated and valued.

The RoCH program supports Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander peoples to exercise sovereignty and affirm custodianship of their cultural heritage material held overseas and make decisions about where and how it can be best looked after in the present. While AIATSIS has been involved in returning our collection material to communities for some time, the RoCH program builds upon the successful RoCH scoping project (2018–2020).

The RoCH program seeks to return Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage materials including but not limited to objects, photographs, audio-visual records, artwork and archival items. The program is scheduled to run for four years, commencing July 2020. Its key objectives are to:

1. Facilitate and secure the return of Indigenous cultural heritage material from overseas to Australia.
2. Enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to understand where their cultural heritage material is held overseas.
3. Influence the development of changes to institutional repatriation practices, policy and guidelines.
4. Foster relationships between overseas collecting institutions and Indigenous communities.

This important work supports the cultural resurgence of Australia's First Nations' peoples and contributes to the 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.

*The real powerful part of self-determination, indeed sovereignty, is the freedom to define ourselves, our context and our situation. So programs like this that build 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 that with support and facilitate that process.*

Craig Ritchie, AIATSIS CEO



## Ethical engagement

AIATSIS recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the right to be fully engaged in any processes, projects and activities that may impact on them. Indigenous repatriation programs, whether involving cultural heritage material or data and knowledge, must proceed on this basis. The AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research (the AIATSIS Code) establishes a framework for designing and carrying out ethical engagement in research, including research involving collections. The AIATSIS Code is informed by the recognition and respect for the rights of Indigenous peoples as articulated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

In the implementation of the RoCH program, AIATSIS employs a staged engagement approach based on the principles of the AIATSIS Code and Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). At all times, community partners involved in returns are at the centre of the decision-making processes and are engaged at the earliest possible stage of the process.



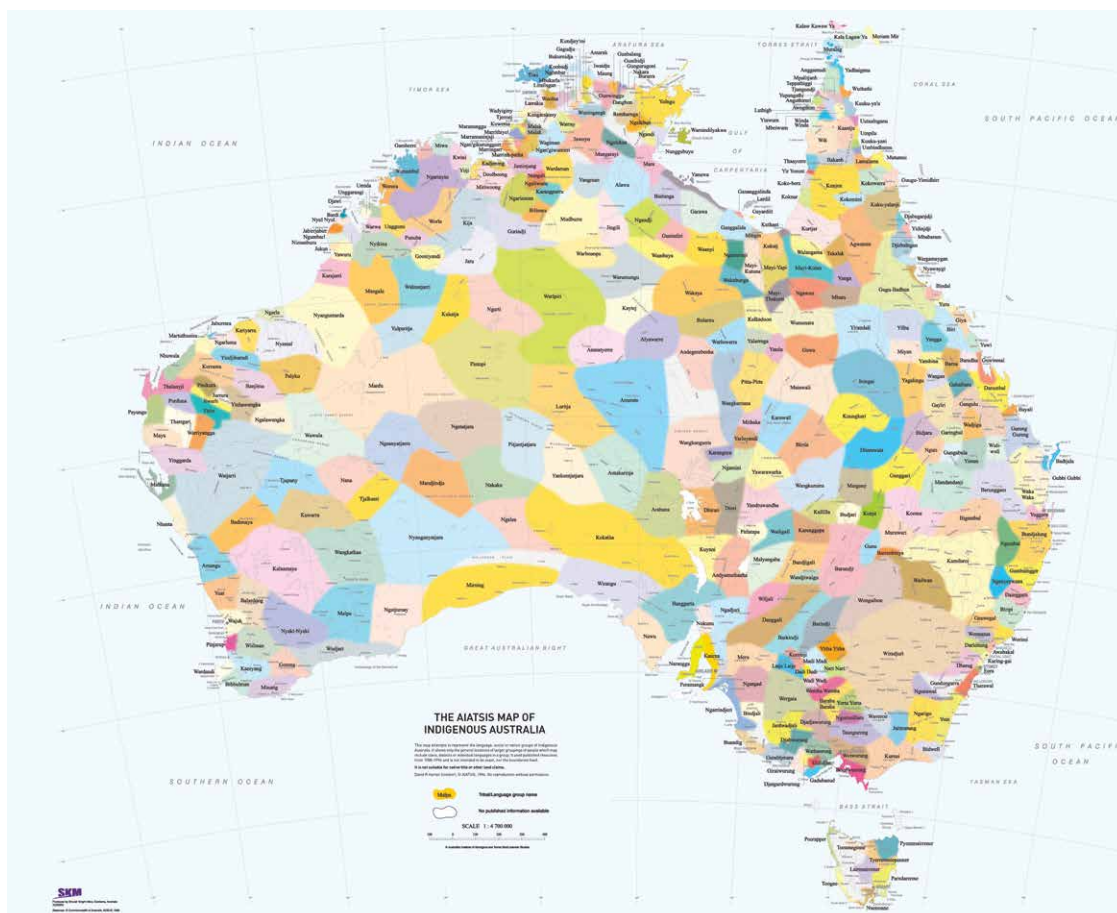
The AIATSIS building in Canberra, named Maraga – a Ngunnawal word for a strong and robust shield. Credit: AIATSIS

# Yindjibarndi and AIATSIS return partnership

The Yindjibarndi peoples are the Traditional Owners and Custodians of a large expanse of Country in the Pilbara region of Western Australia (WA). Tindale (1974) noted their Country as ranging from:

*the lower Hamersley Range plateau south of the Peak Hill Range; in the valley of the Hamersley River from Pialin at the junction of Portland Creek with the Fortescue River, east along a line formed by the edge of the scarp facing the eastern headwaters of Yule River; east along the Fortescue River to Marana Pool, about 10 miles (16 km.) west of Kudaidari. South to the clifflike north-facing scarp of the higher Hamersley Range plateau roughly along a line from Mount Elvire east-southeast to Mount George. Their southern boundary is marked by the change from open porcupine grass (Triodia) country to the densely thicketed mulga country extending south.*

Today, the Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation (YAC) is the legally appointed representative of the Yindjibarndi people. The Corporation is a modern and progressive organisation committed to building a secure future for Yindjibarndi people and maintaining their culture, lore and traditions.



**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/>**

## Initial contact and request for support

In March 2020, the RoCH team was contacted by Ross Chadwick, Anthropology and Archaeology Department of the Western Australian Museum, on behalf of Mr Ian Tremain. Mr Tremain had reached out to the Museum to seek advice about a potential return of eight Aboriginal objects which had been in the care of his wife's family for the past century and were currently in England.

In late April 2020, the RoCH team contacted Mr Tremain to discuss the potential return of the items to Australia. During these conversations Mr Tremain noted that while the items had been a treasured possession of his late mother-in-law and her father before her, the family now felt it was appropriate to return the items to their Traditional Owners and Custodians.

Over the next month, staff from the RoCH team corresponded with Mr Tremain about the particulars involved in undertaking an international return and the various steps required.

## Acquisition of the material

In May 2020, Mr Tremain advised the RoCH team that the original collector – Mr Fred Schelling, his wife's late grandfather, had maintained a meticulous diary which documented his time in Australia. An extract of the diary, along with images of the objects, was provided to the RoCH team in July 2020.

### Mr Fred Schelling – Collector

Fred Schelling was a Swiss national who travelled to Fremantle, WA in November 1910 and on to Millstream Station where he worked as a gardener for approximately three years from December 1910 to June 1913.

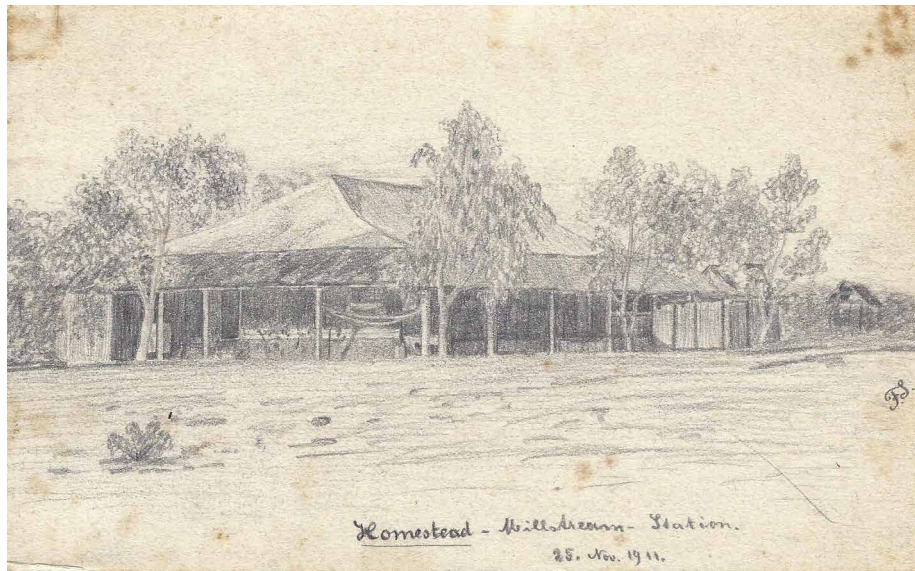


**Mr Fred Schelling.** Credit: image courtesy of Ian and Christine Tremain

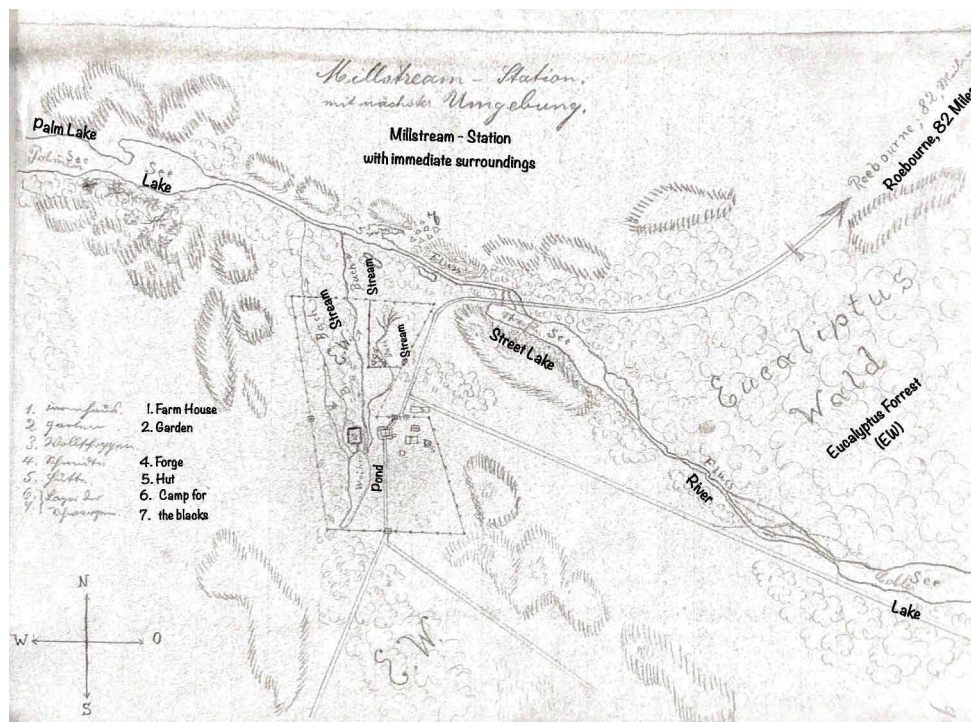


Mr Schelling arrived at Millstream Station on the 31<sup>st</sup> December (New Year's Eve), 1910. He observed on his way into the station, and noted in his diary:

As soon as we were 4 miles out of Millstream, mighty trees appeared and the whole area became more lively. After we crossed 4 clear running streams the woodshed and the farmhouse came in sight ...



Millstream Station Homestead, by Fred Schelling circa 1911.



Map of Millstream Station and immediate surrounds by Fred Schelling circa 1911.

## Interactions and observations

During his time at Millstream, Mr Schelling engaged and worked with a number of Indigenous station hands and staff, observing Yindjibarndi culture, lore, knowledge and practices. Excerpts from his diary are provided below:

*You can hardly find something more suited for fire material, as the grass has got a big resin content. The Indigenous gather the resin and use it partly to make their wooden weapons. ...*

*... Once you set the bark alight it burns to the highest point of the tree without ruining it and creates a thick smoke, the Indigenous use this occurrence to send signals. The bark can easily be separated into many big layers and because of it being waterproof, the Indigenous are using them to build huts and camps etc ...*

*... At this "Station" there are approximately 50 Indigenous. Their huts are 1 mile away from the Farmhouse. In the mornings, at lunchtime and in the evenings they receive bread, meat and tea with sugar. They eat this mundane plain food by sitting on the ground under a tree. They also receive some makeshift clothing items as well as one portion of soap and tobacco each week ...*

*... Nearly every night they [the Indigenous people] are doing a so called "Corroboree". At this so called "Corroboree" the old women and men as well as children sit in a semi-circle, clapping together their wooden weapons and are singing dreadful songs. Small fires in an even distance are lit and with one scream the dancers appear, who are painted across their whole bodies and decorated with feathers. In their own sense of the matter they call this a ceremony, which should be meant for a devil or spirit that stands by their side when they are good and follows them when they have done something naughty. Main ceremonies were held during the daytime ...*

Fred Schelling, 1911



The four wooden spear heads collected by Mr Schelling circa 1911–1913. Credit: Christine and Ian Tremain

## Establishing provenance and custodianship

Following the request from Mr Tremain to return the eight items, the RoCH team commenced research to identify and establish the provenance and cultural origin of the material.

Drawing on information provided in the diary, images of the objects and family history and accounts of Mr Schelling's time in Australia, it was concluded that the eight objects had most likely been acquired from the Millstream Station area in WA.

Based on this information, the RoCH team contacted the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH) WA, to confirm if YAC was the relevant Aboriginal representative body for Millstream Station and to determine if there were any other stakeholders with registered heritage interests in the area. In early July 2020, officers at DPLH confirmed that the YAC was the correct stakeholder for the Millstream area and the appropriate body to engage in return discussions.

Following confirmation from DPLH, in late July 2020, the RoCH team contacted YAC in relation to a possible return and to confirm custodianship:

*To confirm; we are the relevant custodians of Millstream and if any artefacts that came from there in the 1900s it would most definitely be of our ancestors.*

Mr Michael Woodley, YAC CEO, via email – 20th July 2020

Following confirmation of custodianship, a copy of Mr Schelling's diary extract and images of the items were supplied to YAC for their information and consideration. On closer examination of the images and diary, Mr Woodley noted:

*Thank you also for the pics – they are amazing and I can confirm that they belong to Yindjibarndi as to our brand on both the shield (Yarra) and spearthrower (Walbarra). I have attached for example a Walbarra which was made by my great grandfather in the 1960s, you will notice the style and brand are the same (see image overleaf).*

Mr Michael Woodley, YAC CEO, via email – 20 July 2020





Walbarra (spear thrower) made by Mr Woodley's great grandfather in the 1960s for comparison. Credit: Michael Woodley



Walbarra (spear thrower) collected by Fred Schelling. Credit: Christine and Ian Tremain

## Preparing for the return

### Initial meeting – July 2020

Following confirmation of custodianship, in late July 2020, an introductory online meeting between Michael Woodley, YAC CEO, Phil Davies, YAC Culture and RoCH representatives Tamarind Meara, A/G Director, Dr Iain Johnston, Senior Researcher and Rose Rutherford, Assistant Researcher was held. The meeting covered a range of topics and aimed to confirm return preferences, protocols and processes.

At the conclusion of the meeting, it was confirmed that the material would be returned to Roebourne and the custodianship of YAC. The RoCH team was authorised to commence return logistics on behalf of YAC, and owing to COVID-19 travel and border restrictions, permission was provided for the material to be shipped unescorted to Australia and on to Country. It was also decided that a second online meeting would be organised in the coming months with Ian and Christine Tremain (the grand-daughter of the collector) and YAC.

### Planning the journey home – September 2020

In preparation for the material's journey home, in early September 2020, the RoCH team facilitated a video call between Mr Woodley and Ian and Christine Tremain. The meeting was the first time Mr Woodley and the collector's family had spoken to each other and it provided a unique opportunity for the two parties to share stories and knowledge about the items, their acquisition history, Yindjibarndi's culture and Mr Schelling's time at Millstream Station.

The meeting also explored return logistics and the upcoming on-Country return event. At the conclusion of the meeting it was decided that a second video call would be organised for the day of the on-Country return event to enable other Yindjibarndi Elders and representatives to meet Ian and Christine.



Screen shot of the Zoom meeting between YAC, members of the RoCH team and Ian and Christine Tremain.



# The journey home

*It's good to see that these artefacts come back home. The people who were given the artefacts in those times see the value in them. It fills a missing place in our hearts, souls and spirits but it also gives a recognition and confirmation that these things always been with the Yindjibarndi people. The Yindjibarndi people always have that connection either to artefacts, songs, stories, birth and burials we know where you come from.*

Michael Woodley, YAC CEO

On 17th September 2020, with the approval of YAC, the eight items were transported unescorted from Andover, United Kingdom to Perth, WA. Arriving on Friday 18th September 2020, the material was inspected and cleared by Australian Quarantine and Inspection Services (AQIS).

On its arrival into Perth, the material was temporarily transferred and stored at IAS Logistics' secure storage facility before being transported to Karratha on Monday 5th October 2020. On arrival into Karratha the material was collected by Mr Woodley and Middleton Cheedy (Yindjibarndi Elder) who personally escorted the items to Roebourne, WA.

The journey from Karratha to Roebourne was documented by Ngaarda Media for Yindjibarndi's records. With consent from Michael Woodley, Mr Bart Pigram, a WA based AIATSIS Council Member joined the delegation in Karratha and accompanied the eight items to Roebourne where they were welcomed home.

On arrival at Roebourne, the material was unpacked by Yindjibarndi Elders and community representatives at the Ganalili Centre. The welcome was a joyous affair and enabled generations of Yindjibarndi to be present and share knowledge, songs and stories.

Due to COVID travel restrictions the AIATSIS CEO Mr Craig Ritchie and members of the RoCH team joined the community celebration via Zoom as did Ian and Christine Tremain, the collector's family.

The return and its importance to Yindjibarndi was reported on a variety of news and social media platforms, including but not limited to: The Weekend Australian, The West Australian, Pilbara News, Canberra Times, NITV, Ngaarda Media and AIATSIS.



Middleton Cheedy, Yindjibarndi Elder unpacks the crate of objects at the Ganalili Centre. Credit: Ngaarda Media



Yindjibarndi representatives with some of the repatriated items. Credit: Ngaarda Media





Middleton Cheedy and Harry Mills holding the repatriated walbarra and Michael Woodley's great-grandfather's walbarra. Credit: Ngaarda Media



Yindjibarndi Elders and Representatives holding the returned walbarra and Michael Woodley's great-grandfather's walbarra. Credit: Ngaarda Media

# The significance of the material coming home

*We can all feel proud of the great collective achievement in re-uniting these historical and special objects with its people and Ngurra (country). Having them back on Ngurra is very important to us.*

Michael Woodley, YAC CEO

Reflecting on the return of these items, Mr Woodley explained it is good to see these items finally coming home as it recognises Yindjibarndi's continued connection to their country, culture, lore and traditions.



**Middleton Cheedy unpacking the boomerangs from the crate (Left) and Michael Woodley, Yindjibarndi CEO, playing the lillypond song on the repatriated walbarra (Right). Credit: Ngaarda Media**

## Lillypond song

Garlimarlu malu thaayangu yarndayirra

At the lillypond large trees are given shades to each other as it follows through towards the Fortescue River.

Nharlalarngba bawa barndi wirriwi wangka

Alongside of me I am sitting with the smell of water as the winds talk to me.

Garlimarlu malu thaayangu yarndayirra

At the lillypond large trees are given shades to each other as it follows through towards the Fortescue River.

Nhalalarngba bawa barndi wirriwi wangka

Alongside of me I am sitting with the smell of water as the winds talk to me.



As the material was unpacked the Yindjibarndi people in the room cheered. The connection and reunification to the items that Mr Woodley spoke about began almost immediately as he picked up and played the Lillypond Song on the repatriated walbarra, while Middleton Cheedy, Yindjibarndi Elder explained the connection and use of the yarra to Yindjibarndi lore and traditions.

*All these colours come from Millstream and the only colour that is missing from here is the white, so it gives you the picture as I said of the whole of the Yindjibarndi Nation. The Yindjibarndi nation is made up of four colours, that's our relationship system, and that is always parallel, parallel relationships ...*

*... You have a section and there are 13 rooms in the whole of the Yindjibarndi Nation, 13 family groups that look after certain parts of the Yindjibarndi Nation, so we have three here (on the yarra), there are also ten others ...*

*... You know you see in the Olympics, where the guy out in front with flag, so when there is a ceremony on, there is a guy out front with this, dancing in front of the people and when they see this, we know who they are, they are the Yindjibarndi.*

Middleton Cheedy, Yindjibarndi Elder



Middleton Cheedy showing the repatriated yarra (shield) with its distinctive Yindjibarndi markings (brand) at the return event. Credit: Ngaarda Media

### **Significance of the return for the collector's family**

While Christine knew that the family wanted to return the eight items, the impact and significance that the return would have only became apparent after the on-Country return event, where Christine commented:

*It felt even better than anticipated to give the objects back. It was the right thing to do.*

It is hoped that from seeing the success of this return other private collectors come forward and share their collections.

### **Significance of the return for AIATSIS**

AIATSIS' research supports and facilitates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural resurgence in ways which shape the national narrative for all Australians for the better. For those directly involved in the RoCH team it was also very significant as explained by Tamarind Meara, RoCH A/g Director:

*I am extremely honoured and privileged to have been able to facilitate and support the return of these significant items to the Yindjibarndi people and to Country. This return marked the first from a private collector under the RoCH program and is (and will remain) one the proudest moments of my career. For me, repatriation is more than just the physical return or transfer of materials, repatriation is a unique mechanism which enables, promotes and supports the preservation and diversity of Australia's First Nation cultures, knowledge systems and practices. Through repatriation activities, everyone gains.*



**A close up of the repatriated Yindjibarndi yarra. Credit: Christine and Ian Tremain**

# 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, celebrated and respected. By returning the Yindjibarndi 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 Yindjibarndi Nation's story.

*The Yindjibarndi Nation acknowledges AIATSIS for managing the entire process for the artefacts to arrive safely back to the Pilbara. We also thank the collector's family for their support, care and safekeeping of these Yindjibarndi treasures for the past 105 years.*

Michael Woodley, YAC CEO



Yindjibarndi representatives with the repatriated items. Credit: Ngaarda Media



### Sunset in Australia by Fred Schelling (1911)

Far away from my dear home,  
Separated by foaming seas,  
I sat in the isolated bush  
Of the great Australian continent.

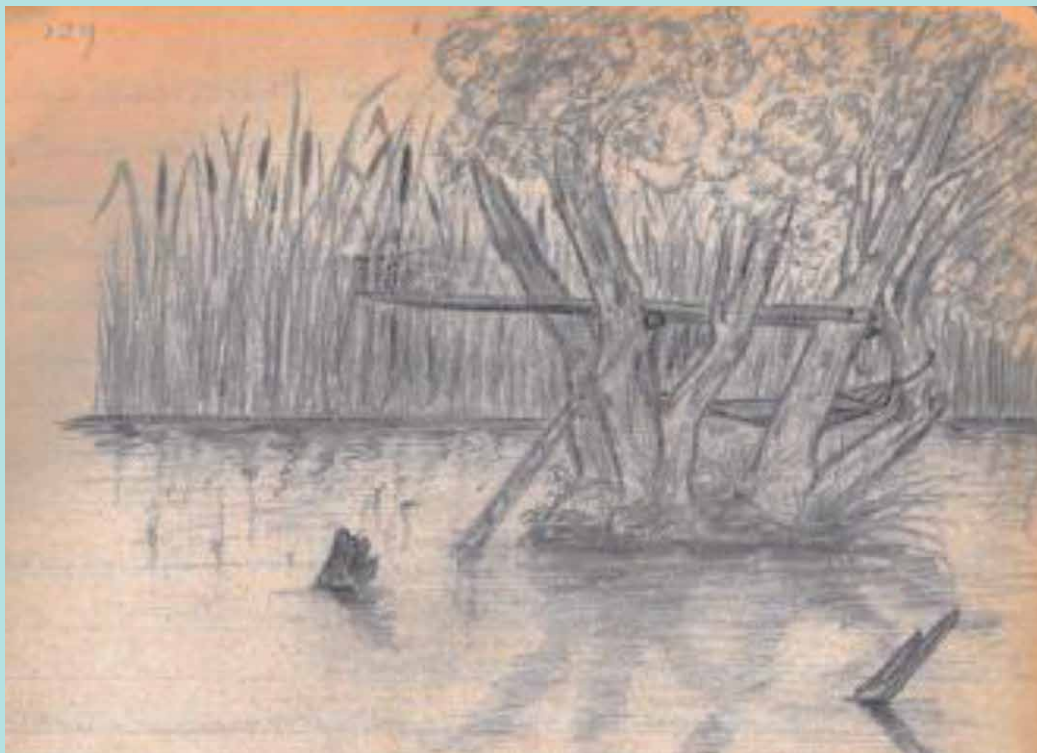
I see a calm lake,  
Black swans sway upon it,  
Wild ducks quack in the reeds  
A kangaroo gets up from the water it is drinking.

The grasses, trees and hills are all foreign to me.  
Only one has recognised me  
In the midst of this wilderness.

It is the old sun,  
Which loves me with twice the passion  
And moves on to far away Switzerland  
As it gives me a final kiss.

She is still standing there in her halo of golden rays.  
The bushes and trees glitter like pearls.  
The vast land is doused in a magical gleam  
Yes! No little church stands up on the hills against the blue backdrop of the sky-  
And I can't hear the familiar tolling of the bells of my home in this lonely expanse.

I can still see the crimson veil which decorates the horizon, it feels so familiar in my heart.  
It isn't desire, it isn't pain, but every Swiss person feels it.  
So my old friend indicated that the day was nearing the evening, and almost in the same hour,  
She shone on Switzerland, heralding the oncoming morning.





# References

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Schelling, F, [n.d], Diary of Fred Schelling a gardener – an extract.

Tindale, N, 1974, Aboriginal Tribes of Australia: Their terrain, environmental controls, distribution, limits and proper names. <http://archives.samuseum.sa.gov.au/tindaletribes/index.html> accessed 21 October 2020.

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/declaration.html> accessed 3 January 2019.

# Media coverage

As anticipated the good news story of the return garnered the attention of various regional, state and national media broadcasters and outlets. Examples of this coverage are provided in the section below.

## Printed media

### The West Australian, 5 October 2020

**The West Australian**

Indigenous Australians Australia Culture WA News Pilbara Pilbara Federal Politics

**Return of Cultural Heritage initiative sees Aboriginal artefacts returned to Yindjibarndi community in Pilbara**

Rangi Hirini The West Australian  
Mon, 5 October 2020 7:21PM

📷 Elder Middleton Cheedy holds the traditional shield belonging to the Yindjibarndi people as he unpacks eight items repatriated during a ceremony in Roebourne. Credit: Ngaarda Media

### The Weekend Australian, 10–11 October 2020

**Epic tale ends in a homecoming**

PAIGE TAYLOR  
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS  
CORRESPONDENT

Harry Mills holds the shield and spear made by his ancestor, and the lessons from his youth, walk over him.

In his Yindjibarndi language, 78-year-old Mills begins to sing the songs the old people taught him on traditional lands 100km north of Perth.

An epic effort has culminated the shield and spear and six other precious Yindjibarndi objects left the Pilbara in 1911 with Swiss boericulturalist Fred Schelling. After Schelling's death in Berkshire, England, in 1963, his daughter Joy displayed the objects privately in her home in Hannover.

Joy died last year aged 93, leaving her daughter Christine Tremain to unearth clues that ultimately sent the objects on a 14,000km journey home.

Their arrival last week in the Pilbara town of Roebourne was a happy event. Senior Aboriginal people recognised the shield's distinctive lines defining 12 family groups of the Yindjibarndi nation. As local leader Michael Woodley used a drill to unseal the metal trunk containing two boomerangs, four wooden spear heads, the spear and shield, Aboriginal children stood on their toes for a better view. Elders cheered.

"We know they took good care of these things," Mr Woodley said.

"Having them back on Yindjibarndi country is very important to us. It is the first repatriation from a private collector under the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies' initiative called Return of Cultural Heritage, which has successfully encouraged institutions around the world to return significant objects including skeletal remains.

It was Schelling's diary that left Mrs Tremain and her husband in little doubt about where the objects came from. Translated from Old German to German then from German to English, Schelling's journal reveals wide-eyed wonder at life in the Australian outback in 1910.

Schelling, from the wine-growing town of Schaffhausen on the Rhine River, landed in the Pilbara on a wool ship with a promised job as a gardener at the now defunct Millstream Station. He was 22.

Schelling wrote that Indigenous people looked after the cattle and sheep at Millstream, now a national park. His journal describes unfamiliar plants and how the Yindjibarndi used them to send smoke signals and make shelters.

The journal was a revelation for Mrs Tremain, who was 13 when Schelling died. She remembers him as quiet, gentle and resourceful. He never told her about his three years in Australia.

She said it felt even better than anticipated to give the objects back. "It was the right thing to do," Mrs Tremain said.

Harry Mills with some of the Yindjibarndi artefacts near Roebourne, in the Pilbara region of Western Australia

# Heritage comes back home

**RANGI HIRINI**

Eight artefacts of cultural significance to the Yindjibarndi community in the Pilbara have been returned after more than a century in overseas hands.

Community representatives have welcomed their return following a Commonwealth initiative to repatriate Aboriginal objects stored in overseas collections.

At a ceremony in Roebourne last week, the artefacts — including a shield, spear thrower, two boomerangs and four wooden spear heads — were returned.

Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation chief executive Michael Woodley said the homecoming signified recognition and respect for the Yindjibarndi people.

“We can all feel proud of the great collective achievement in reuniting these historical and special objects with its people and Ngurra (country),” he said.

“We also thank the collector’s family for their support, care and safekeeping of these Yindjibarndi treasures for the past 105 years.”

In 1915, Yindjibarndi people gave the artefacts to a German worker who had been working as a gardener at Millstream Station.

His family have been storing the items ever since. More than 100,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage

items are being held in 194 international collecting institutions.

These include items stolen from graves of dead Indigenous people and sold to museums by explorers.

Funded by the Federal Government, the Return of Cultural Heritage initiative is led by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies who helped return the artefacts.



Yindjibarndi elder Middleton Cheedy checks returned items.

## Social media

In addition to the printed media, the return was also shared on various social media platforms including but not limited to Ngaarda Media, AIATSIS and NITV.

**AIATSIS**  
10 h · 🌐

Eight cultural items held in the United Kingdom for over one hundred years was returned to the Yindjibarndi nation.

The repatriated items held by a private collector in Andover in the United Kingdom include a shield, spear thrower, boomerangs and spearheads.

The return of the items is being facilitated by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies und... See more

Example of the AIATSIS Facebook post on the return.



# AIATSIS

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