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# **Activating community-based Indigenous language and culture resources for university teaching: report on the development of a digital shell and pilot delivery**

Final report 2017

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Project leader: Professor Michael Christie

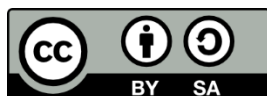
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<http://language-shell.cdu.edu.au/>

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**Bininj  
Kunwok  
Language  
Project**



## List of acronyms used

AIATSIS: Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

ANU: Australian National University

CDU: Charles Darwin University

LMS: learning management system

NT: Northern Territory

OLT: Office of Learning and Teaching

PELTHE: Promotion of Excellence in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education

TAFE: Technical and Further Education

## Note on terminology

Throughout this report, the following terms are used:

Bininj: the Indigenous people of West Arnhem Land

Balanda: non-Indigenous people in general

Aboriginal/Indigenous: terms used interchangeably to refer to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples more broadly

Digital shell: an online template created to house various resources and curricula for sharing Indigenous language and culture

# Executive summary

## Activating community-based indigenous language and culture resources for university teaching: report on the development of a digital shell and pilot delivery



Charles Darwin University, 2017

<http://language-shell.cdu.edu.au/>

### Context

The ongoing problem of embedding Australian Indigenous knowledge in the scholarly life of Australian universities derives, to a large extent, from the fact that Australian Indigenous knowledge is local and owned. Aboriginal languages and the knowledges they enable (historical, cultural, environmental, biological, etc.) are governed by and must be taught by their owners. This project addressed how an online Aboriginal language-culture teaching system might be developed under the authority of the language owners, in such a way that its delivery could be supervised by Aboriginal language owners while simultaneously being appropriate content for tertiary-level studies of Australian Indigenous languages and cultures.

The project team had worked successfully with the online delivery of NT East Arnhem land Yolŋu languages for many years, and used seed funding from the OLT/PELTHE to fund the engagement of Bininj (Indigenous) elders in West Arnhem Land for the development, delivery and evaluation of an online course in Bininj Kunwok language, alongside the development of a template for other groups to use to share their own language.

### Aims of the project

- to identify a team of language authorities interested in having their language taught at the tertiary level
- to collaborate with the team to develop an online learning management system that allows them to share their knowledge in their own way, on their own terms
- to support the Bininj language content with learner notes, linguistic information and other resources
- to provide a digital shell, based on the collaborative work and evaluation, that can be used by any language group wishing to develop their own content and share their language, history and culture on their own terms
- to fully evaluate the process, including feedback from the learners
- to report on the process, including recommendations for how the shell can be used by Australian Indigenous groups for their own purposes, and Australian universities for their academic teaching programs.

## Project approach

The approach began with the Bininj language authorities, engaging them as consultants to the project at all stages, and working with their ideas on what should be taught, in what order and in what ways.

By working through regular meetings that discussed language and pedagogy, the needs and aspirations of the elders and their communities; evaluating resources already available (through archives and various websites); and recording videos specifically for the project; a four-unit curriculum with a configuration of digital resources was developed collaboratively.

Around thirty tertiary-level students completed the trial between September and December 2016, with many others attempting various sections, and participants provided ongoing evaluation of their experience of the course. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, especially for the bespoke short videos by the Bininj authorities presenting information about their culture and language.

## Project outputs

Available from the project website at <http://language-shell.cdu.edu.au/> are:

- a digital shell containing a suite of resources co-designed with Bininj authorities for access by Australian tertiary students that include a curriculum outline and extensive resources (videos, audio recordings, stories, pictures, linguistic notes, in English and Bininj Kunwok)
- a parallel digital shell derived from the prototype, which can be populated by language groups around Australia who want to strengthen, promote and revitalise their languages and culture, and share it with others
- instructions and advice for other language groups (e.g. land councils, language centres, community groups) and universities to access and populate the shell

## Impact

The project attracted local and national attention from the outset. Over 150 people expressed interest in participating in the trial project, with over 130 people engaging with the materials at some level. The ANU has requested expansion of the course units to be made accessible for a full semester of accredited undergraduate study beginning in Semester 1, 2019. Other groups are investigating uses of the course for induction of new staff to the area and use in the local schools for Bininj students. Another Northern Territory language centre is working on developing their own course using the digital shell.



***Bininj Kunwok Language Project Reference group,  
Gunbalanva. November 2016***

A key impact has been on the language authorities and their communities who tend to see the program more as an opportunity for respectful both-ways sharing between Bininj and Balanda (non-Indigenous) culture, rather than simply for language teaching per se. The program also raises the awareness and prestige of the language in the wider Australian community. A program such as this can serve the interests of both the universities who wish to include Aboriginal languages in their courses of study, and Indigenous language owners who want new generations of Australians to be culturally aware and competent.

### Key Findings

The project demonstrated that with adequate funding, and by putting Australian Indigenous language owners and authorities at the centre of the process, it is possible to develop an online teaching–learning system that will attract and benefit large numbers of keen tertiary students.

The use of digital resources, particularly bespoke short videos in language, proved a key aspect of the course development and delivery, as did the flexibility of access and pacing of learning, which suited both the teachers and the learners.

Many students felt that an opportunity to have live conversations with their teachers would have been very useful, so further development of this course, or repurposing of the digital shell for other languages, should explore possibilities for engaging paid ‘language buddies’, available as fee-for-service on the terms of the language owners.



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# Chapter 1: Context

The ongoing problem of embedding Australian Indigenous knowledge in the scholarly life of Australian universities derives largely from the fact that Australian Indigenous knowledge is local, and owned. Aboriginal languages and the knowledge they enable are governed by and must be taught by their owners. A second problem is that the language communities are small and often struggling to survive. These issues, while widely acknowledged, have never found good solutions in the academy.

This project developed, in collaboration with language owners, an online learning management system for a small Northern Territory language group. It also recommended some structures and practices for others interested in populating the empty shell of the learning management system with their own language and culture resources and sharing them under the authority of their owners.

## 1.1 Australian Indigenous languages in Australian universities

Of over 250 Australian languages, currently there are only six courses available in Australia for learning Indigenous languages at university level. These are promoted through the [University Languages Portal Australia](#) (2015), which was also funded by the federal government's Office of Learning and Teaching (Simpson, Hajek, Möllering, Travis, & Lloyd-Smith, 2016). The lack of attention to language acquisition of Indigenous languages is concerning to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people as it signals the further demise of Indigenous languages and cultures in Australia, and their lack of visibility in higher education (Simpson, 2014).

The six languages currently available at Australian universities are scattered across several institutions. Three are considered 'strong' languages (Marmion, Obata, & Troy, 2014), which are still being transmitted to children, namely:

- [Yolngu Studies](#) available at Charles Darwin University, with several units offered in Gupapuyngu language at both undergraduate and graduate level (Christie, 2008)
- [Arrernte](#) is offered as part of undergraduate courses in Indigenous Language and Linguistics, also at Charles Darwin University
- [Pitjantjatjara](#) is offered as a two-week intensive Summer School at the University of South Australia with some places available for university credit.

Three other languages are in various stages of revival or revitalisation.

- [Gamilaraay](#) of New South Wales is offered at ANU and the University of Sydney in several units and various modes (intensive or semester units)
- [Kaurna](#) of South Australia is offered as part of a Summer School at the University of Adelaide, primarily as a linguistics course and with some language learning incorporated (Amery, 2007)
- [Wiradjuri](#) of New South Wales is offered at Charles Sturt University, with a Graduate Certificate in Wiradjuri Language, Culture and Heritage.

These are the courses currently available in Australia (as at early 2017), though other courses have been offered at various times through other institutions, including language centres and TAFE colleges (Amery, 2007; Gale, 2011).

Several issues affect the delivery of courses in Indigenous and other less widely spoken languages at university, with the following reasons commonly cited (Giaccon & Simpson, 2011; Ward, 2015; Ward & Genabith, 2003):

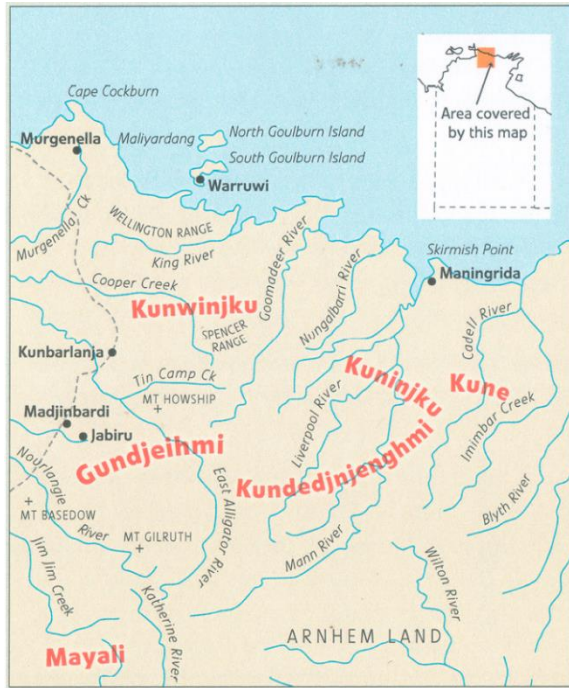
- Lack of resources
  - textbooks, dictionaries, reading materials
  - possible lack of standardised orthography
- Lack of teachers
  - may be due to lack of education in the language community
  - may be due to lack of speakers of the language in some severely endangered or revitalisation contexts
- Lack of students
  - small numbers of potential students may come from the language community and wish to research their own language or develop literacy skills
  - with the decline of enrolments in even large world language courses at university level, less-commonly taught languages are rarely likely to meet minimum class size criteria required
  - economic rationalisation of university courses means only those courses with large numbers are taught (Gale, 2011).

With a suitable technical solution, some of the issues may be reduced as online language courses offer some mediation of these challenges. As has been found for many world languages, as well as less-commonly taught languages (Dunne & Palvyshyn, 2013; Ward & Genabith, 2003), the online environment has affordances that may enable courses to be run with lower overheads than face-to-face courses. Where teachers are in short supply, having ‘quality on-line resources ... takes the pressure and burden off the teachers to provide all that is needed to successfully run their classes’ (Gale, 2011, p. 285). This can allow for reduced costs to institutions, potentially facilitating courses to be run with fewer teaching staff, which can mitigate smaller class sizes.

To date there has been no simple strategy for developing new courses combining the authority and supervision of language owners with the affordances of digital technologies.

## 1.2 Bininj Kunwok

Bininj Kunwok (‘people’s language’) is the name used for a chain of six mutually intelligible dialects stretching across West Arnhem Land, in the Top End of the Northern Territory. The best known language of the chain is Kunwinjku, and the other varieties are Kundjeyhmi, Kune, Kuninjku, Mayali and Kundedjnjenghmi (Bininj Kunwok Project, 2017). Because of its status as a common language used across the region, Kunwinjku was chosen as the focus language for this course.



**Figure 1: Map of Bininj Kunwok area  
(Garde, 2014)**

Bininj people live in the area stretching from Kakadu National Park in the Top End of the Northern Territory, south to Pine Creek and Manyallaluk, across the Arnhem Land plateau and east to the Mann, Liverpool and Cadell Rivers districts, and as far east as some outstations south of Ramingining in central Arnhem Land. The main communities are Gunbalanya (formerly Oenpelli) and Jabiru, with other groups of speakers at Maningrida and Goulburn Island (see Figure 1) (Garde, 2014).

A Bininj Kunwok Language Project is funded by the Indigenous Languages Support program of the Australian Government's Office for the Arts, coordinated by Dr Murray Garde and affiliated with a number of local organisations, including the Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation, Warddeken Land Management and West Arnhem Land Shire Council. This project maintains an active

webpage at [www.bininjkunwok.org.au](http://www.bininjkunwok.org.au) as well as a social media presence on Facebook and Twitter.

In the 1970s, the government school at Gunbalanya ran a bilingual program where the children learnt basic literacy in Kunwinjku before transitioning to English. While the program only lasted a few years, resources were produced to support literacy. Many of these were destroyed after the program closed, however some were salvaged by the local missionary and kept in storage for many years before being provided to Charles Darwin University for digitisation and inclusion in the [Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages](http://Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages) (Bow, Christie, & Devlin, 2014).

While Bininj Kunwok does not suffer from the lack of resources or speakers noted above, there are concerns about language loss and its ongoing transmission and maintenance, as in all Australian languages.

## Chapter 2: Approach

### 2.1 The Bininj authorities

This project took seriously the authority and governance of the Indigenous authorities whose languages and cultures would be shared through this digital shell. Project Leader, Professor Michael Christie, was a teacher-linguist in East Arnhem Land for many years, and his experience developing the longstanding Yolngu Studies course at Charles Darwin University (Christie, 2008), in collaboration with and under the authority of Yolngu leaders, set the standard for work of this nature. Christie has had a long but marginal association with West Arnhem Land languages and their speakers, and had long supported the idea of a university-level course in Bininj languages. The OLT/PELTHE funding allowed for this to happen.

Over a period of several months in 2016, with several meetings on Bininj land in Jabiru and Gunbalanya, a committee of Bininj elders was established to oversee the project. The Bininj Kunmayali ('people's knowledge') committee (a subset of the Bininj Kunwok Language Project Reference Group) was invited to view existing materials created in Kunwinjku language and available online (e.g. through the Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages (Christie, Devlin, & Simpson, 2012) and the Bininj Kunwok website (Bininj Kunwok Project, 2017), as well as other examples of online language learning options, such as the Yolngu Studies website (Yolngu Studies, 2017). The committee was then invited to contribute their opinions on what should be included in the proposed online learning course.



**Figure 2: Language authorities and research team, Jabiru, March 2016**

The committee shared their experiences of teaching Bininj children through the Warddeken Land Management Culture Camp, where the children learnt to talk about themselves, their skin names and subsections, and about 'Djang' (sacred sites) which are important to understand and respect. They saw this as a useful model for teaching language and culture to non-Indigenous learners. It was agreed to focus on Kunwinjku as the 'lingua franca' of the Bininj Kunwok language area, that was also the language with the most resources available. Two Bininj women recorded videos introducing themselves (in Kunwinjku and in English) and inviting learners to begin to learn their language.

I want Balanda people to learn our language just as we want Bininj people to keep learning it too. For instance, if you come here to work or help us in other ways, there might be different things you might have to come to do on our country. Then we want you to learn language so we all can work together, look after each other and look after our country and language too, and plan things for the community.

*(Bininj elder Donna Nadjamerrek, Gunbalanya, August 2016)*

## 2.2 Technical development

The intention was to develop an online site that could be used by other language groups, so the project team wanted software with a low barrier to entry that could be easily adapted and supported beyond the current funding cycle. The team considered the benefits of developing a bespoke site designed according to the project's own specifications, but this risked incurring additional costs in maintaining a service arrangement with a web developer. Instead, existing options were considered.

The selection of a platform was informed by the following criteria:

- free or very low cost
- customisable look and feel
- good support available
- flexibility to add different features
- strong technical skills to implement and populate not required
- different file types (text, image, video, audio, etc.) allowed
- able to handle Unicode (no special characters are used in Kunwinjku but may be required for other languages).

WordPress was selected as the appropriate architecture for the digital shell. WordPress is a free and open-source content management system, commonly used for blogging and developing simple websites. The project manager had used this previously and found that it met all the above criteria. The enormous range of themes (which determine the display and layout of the site) and plug-ins (pieces of software which add functionality) make it easy for users to add features to their website without needing to know how to write computer code. These features also make WordPress sites highly customisable so that other language groups wanting to use the shell could tailor the look and feel of the site to suit their own needs.

As open-source software, WordPress is community-driven and has a very active online community of users and developers who can provide advice and support. This was desirable over relying on a single web developer or company that may require ongoing payments for fixes, updates and support.

Once WordPress.org was chosen as the platform, the project manager researched various learning management systems (LMS) that would work within the WordPress site. There are many different options for these, including a number of paid themes with additional commercial features and various licensing agreements, depending on how many sites are

required. For the purposes of the pilot, however, the preferred option was to choose an off-the-shelf, free, open-source LMS. The project's criteria for this included:

- student enrolment/login processes that allow facilitators to monitor student activity
- course outline that enabled information for participants to see the overall structure and process
- week-by-week or unit-by-unit overview
- lesson pages that could include texts, multimedia, activities, resources and assessment tasks
- option for activities such as quizzes, short-answer questions, upload a text/video/audio file
- simple uploading of resources including text, audio, video, images in different formats, as well as the ability to link to/from other online resources such as the Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages or the [bininjunkunwok.org.au](http://bininjunkunwok.org.au) website
- assessment tasks, including some means of assessing and giving feedback
- feedback opportunities for learners to report on aspects of the course
- forum/chat for participants to talk to each other, to course facilitators, to Bininj
- tracking/analytics so that users could track their progress through the course and activities and to enable facilitators to know who is doing what activities and how much time they are spending on them
- profiles of learners and of instructors/facilitators
- mobile-friendly.

An additional option worth considering was whether a payment system should be incorporated. While the pilot course developed for this project would be free, and any university courses would have separate financial systems outside of the course, there may be possibilities for language centres or communities to run courses as a fee-for-service. Most of the LMS options considered include these, as many users set up courses for commercial purposes.

After time spent browsing and evaluating different options, LearnPress was chosen as the LMS. This is a free WordPress plugin that works with any theme and has options for paid add-ons. It appeared to have good support, a large user base, good reviews and all the functions required. With the desire to keep things simple and avoid too much technical capacity to create courses, another attraction was the description on the home page that 'we really made it for lazy people' (ThimPress, 2017).

LearnPress supports the creation of courses, lessons and units, with additional options available. Within the 'digital shell project' website, a single course was created ('Bininj Kunwok language course'), with the option of hosting other courses on the same platform. Initially, four units were set up (intended as one week's worth of work each), and each unit had 10 lessons (plus a 'Before we begin' introductory lesson)—see details of curriculum development in the following section.

In addition to the lessons, LearnPress provided the option for quizzes, forums, profiles and other community features through plug-ins that can be activated and are customised to run with LearnPress. Other plug-ins are available; however, some do not work well within LearnPress.



Alongside the LearnPress units and lessons, any number of custom pages can be created within WordPress, such as About and Contact pages, plus bespoke pages such as definitions of linguistic terms. These can be arranged in various ways to suit the course, with several options for screen layout and menus – in this case they were listed along a top menu beneath the header image. The goal was to have a seamless user experience to work between WordPress and LearnPress without being aware of the infrastructure.



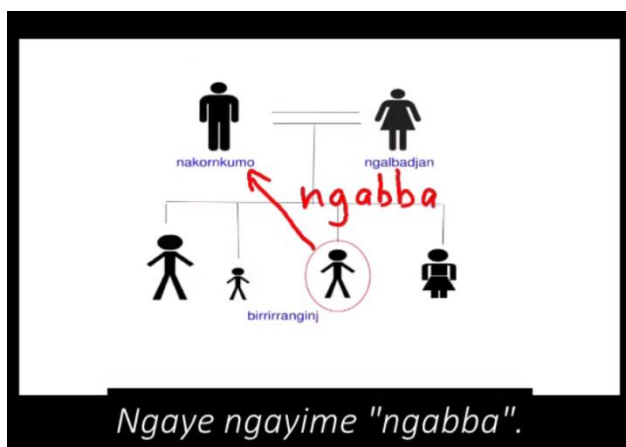
*Figure 3: Screenshot from website home page*

Another consideration was that lessons and resources could be implemented on alternate sites, for other groups to adapt to their own needs. Since some universities use different LMS (such as Moodle or Blackboard) it should be possible to copy and paste whole lessons (or even whole courses) to other platforms.

## **2.3 Curriculum development**

The negotiation of curriculum involved drawing on the strengths of both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of the team. Rather than suggesting the content selected by the non-Indigenous team members for the units, the committee was asked 'What do you think Balanda (white Australians, Europeans) should know when they come to community?' The committee agreed that the first lesson should focus on identity, with the use of one of the videos of Jill (Bininj language authority consultant) introducing herself as a starting point for grammar and vocabulary, as well as an introduction to issues of cultural importance such as the skin name system. Committee members were invited to make their own videos introducing themselves in the same way, which were recorded on the day of the meeting in Gunbalanya and included in the materials for Unit 1.





For the following lessons, the committee decided that Unit 2 should focus on immediate family—names for father, mother, and so forth. These can be linked with skin names, for example ‘I’m Ngalkangila, my ngabbard (father) is Nawamud (skin name)’. This could also include cultural information like brother–sister avoidance rules, and point out differences from Balanda understandings of family (for example, your mother’s sisters are also your mothers).

**Figure 4: Screenshot from video about kinship**

For Unit 3 it was decided to focus on directions and movement (coming and going). There were some books in the Living Archive that would be appropriate to include, and cultural information could incorporate the use of compass directions (north, south, east, west) instead of left and right.

For the final unit, the Bininj committee proposed a focus on ‘Karrinahnarren—Being careful’, which includes information about sacred sites, and different plants and animals, namely which ones may be dangerous to touch or to eat or to go near. This would produce some useful grammar, like negatives and imperatives (e.g. ‘don’t touch!’) and generate some interesting activities. More advanced kinship terminology would be scattered throughout the units.

Balanda can learn Kunwinjku too, so we can share and work together here at Gunbalanya. And so we can communicate with each other in language. And teach children together, teach them in our language and in English, what they call "both-ways learning". Also it can help Balanda to know how to be safe on our country, to avoid sacred or dangerous places, and so we can learn from each other more.

*Cheryl Nadjalaburnburn, Gunbalanya, August 2016*

The negotiation of content was a significant part of the process of curriculum development. It was important to focus on the Bininj committee’s determination of what should be taught, while the non-Indigenous team members worked out how this could be presented online. As a result of these negotiations, the lessons outlined in Table 1 were created for each unit.

Details of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation were added, mostly by the Balanda team members. Each unit also included a selection of helpful phrases that could be used in interactions with Bininj, plus readings taken from the Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages. Activities were added to give learners the opportunity to put into practice what they had learned, and they were invited to send audio or video files for feedback.

**Table 1: Summary of lessons**

UNIT	1	2	3	4
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Introductions</b>	<b>Family matters</b>	<b>Coming &amp; going</b>	<b>Being Careful</b>
<b>Cultural info</b>	Skin systems	Skin & family	Grandparents/grandchildren	Staying safe/showing respect
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Skin names, verbs, nouns	Terms of address	More kin terms, animals, places	More kin terms, verbs, nouns
<b>Useful phrases</b>	'My name is,' 'That's good'	'What do I call you?' etc.	'I don't know', 'Speak slowly'	'Can I go there?' 'Who do I ask?'
<b>Grammar</b>	Basic sentence formation, 1sg	2sg, 3sg, verbs, question words	Q&A, tenses, plural pronouns	Dual, trial, inc/exc, negative
<b>Pronunciation</b>	Overview, spelling	Vowels	Nasals, h, retroflex	Stops, r/rr, diphthongs
<b>Reading</b>	<i>Duruk kanan...</i>	<i>Kokok wam ..., Kakkak nang ...</i>	<i>Wurdwurd birriwam ..., Baleh yabok?</i>	<i>Kokok dja ..., Yun yikarrme, Kakkak kahkinje</i>
<b>Activity</b>	Introduce yourself	Talk about your family	Describe pictures of people, places	Free choice of activities
<b>Njalenjale</b>	Referring to people	Aboriginal kinship systems	Directions	Continuing with language
<b>Quiz</b>	Pronunciation, skin system	Skin and family names	Grandparents and grandchildren	Extending the family

## 2.4 Materials

An early stage of the project involved an audit of what materials were already available on Kunwinjku language and culture. Bininj Kunwok is among the more well-resourced language groups in the country, with a significant online presence and many research and other projects available. Three main sources used in the course included:

- The Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages. This includes 133 items in Kunwinjku, including readers, alphabet books and short stories, freely available for use under a Creative Commons license. Key members of the project team were also responsible for developing this resource (Bow et al., 2014).



Figure 5: Screenshot of Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages - Kunwinjku collection

- 'Kunwinjku Kunwok' a learners' guide written by Steve and Narelle Etherington (1998), former missionaries to Gunbalanya, who gave permission to use this resource widely for this project.
- BininjKunwok.org.au website—including blog posts, pages on language, short lectures by Murray Garde on important points of grammar.

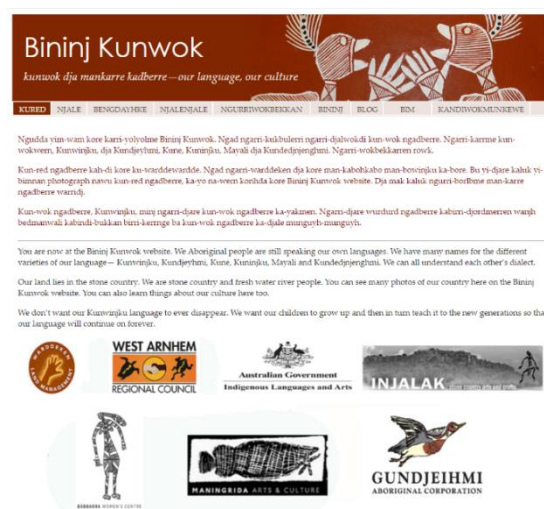


Figure 6: Screenshot from Bininj Kunwok website



**Figure 7: Screen capture of kinship video created by Jill Nganjmirra**

In addition to these resources, new ones were developed specifically for this course. Two members of the Bininj Kunmayali committee (Jill Nganjmirra and Seraine Namundja) live in Darwin, and were generous with their time and willing to participate in the development of resources. Using low-cost hardware and software (see *Appendix B: Tools used and recommendations*), the team created short videos of these women reading stories from the Living Archive collection, recording word lists, or describing or demonstrating various aspects of language and culture. These were subtitled (sometimes in English,

sometimes in Kunwinjku) and stored on the CDU library website, alongside audio files and other multimedia such as cartoons and screencasts, linked from the WordPress site.

It is important to note that while the project conforms to the intellectual property agreement with the funding body, the intellectual property for any traditional knowledge included in the resources is retained by the language authorities.

To assist learners with minimal linguistic background, a glossary of linguistic terms was created (see Figure 8). Any technical terms used in any of the lesson content (such as ‘morphology’ ‘singular’, ‘diphthong’) plus definitions of common terms that have a specific meaning in linguistics (such as ‘verb’ and ‘object’) were given simple definitions via hyperlinks to this page. Using such a feature allowed the facilitators to include some technical terms without overwhelming learners with too much jargon.

## Linguistic terms

Here you will find definitions and explanations of some of the more technical terms

- adjective
- adverb
- affix
- alveolar ridge
- consonant
- diphthong
- dual
- glottal stop
- inclusive/exclusive
- moiety
- morphology
- noun
- noun class
- object
- orthography
- part of speech
- phonology
- plural
- possessive
- prefix
- preposition
- pronominal prefix
- pronoun
- retroflex
- root
- singular
- stop
- subject
- suffix
- tense
- transitivity
- trial
- verb
- voicing
- vowel
- word order

### moiety

# Edit

Moieties are two social or ritual groups into which a people is divided.

Everything in the Bininj world view is made up of two moieties, Yirridjila and Duwa. These are two halves of a holistic world view. Everything in the world, the countryside, nature and society is known to be of one, or the other (never both).

A man and his offspring are in one of these moieties, his wife and her siblings and their father are in the other. These have strong influences over ceremonial and relational activities and interactions.

**Figure 8: Screenshot of Glossary of Linguistic Terms with one example**

## 2.5 Implementation

The initial application proposed recruiting 10–20 students from Charles Darwin University to test the pilot program; however, a number of individuals outside the university had communicated to project team members their desire to learn Kunwinjku. The team decided to draw on these resources instead, with the idea that distinguishing this course from students enrolled at a specific university meant that the project would be separate from any existing accredited course. It was made clear that participation in the research would have no effect on any existing study program.

Project team member Murray Garde has been maintaining a mailing list of people interested in receiving updates from the [bininjgunwok.org.au](http://bininjgunwok.org.au) website. They receive semiregular emails teaching new vocabulary, as shown in Figure 9. A message was sent to subscribers inviting them to participate in the pilot course. The message accompanied the phrase being taught 'kamak kanbukkan? Can you teach me?'



**Figure 9: Screenshot of mailout to recruit participants**

Over 150 people responded to the callout and completed the online application form (see *Appendix C: Expressions of interest*). This form asked for information such as location, highest level of education achieved (since the course was designed for university students), knowledge of other languages (Indigenous or other), plus other information. The following table (Table 2) gives a summary of the profile of learners who expressed interest in the pilot program.

**Table 2: Summary of learner profiles (n = 154)**

<b>Locations</b>	West Arnhem (47)	Other NT (26)	Other Australia (62)	Overseas (20)
	30%	17%	40%	13%
<b>Education</b>	High school (4)	TAFE (12)	Undergraduate (67)	Postgraduate (71)
	2%	8%	44%	46%
<b>Language</b>	Some Bininj Kunwok (77)	Some other Indigenous language (44)	Other non- Indigenous language (128)	No other language (36)
	50%	28%	83%	23%

Applicants were mailed a Plain Language Statement (see

*Appendix D: Plain language statement*), which outlined the purpose of the study, the benefits, expectations of participants, risks, confidentiality and policies on participation and sharing of results. This also included the names of the researchers involved, contact details and a note about ethical guidelines and information about the CDU Human Research Ethics Committee. Applicants were asked to read and sign a consent form (see *Appendix E: Consent form*), which outlined further details, with an option to allow their results and comments to be made available for future research, as appropriate. When the trial started, 131 applicants had returned the signed consent form.

The course was opened on 1 September 2016, with only Unit 1 uploaded. Additional units were added at approximately two-week intervals. In the early stages, the involvement of the facilitators was minimal. The project manager responded to emails as necessary and monitored the forum, passing on questions to Bininj committee members or the linguist as appropriate, or responding to messages directly. She also ensured the maintenance of the webpages, in particular responding to a report that the course pages were unavailable due to an update of LearnPress. Some adjustments were made to pages in response to feedback as the course progressed; for example, some noted that the videos did not always play within the course, so links were added from each of the lesson pages to the appropriate videos on that site.





**Figure 10: Committee members watching videos submitted by participants**

Feedback on the text, audio and video files submitted for assessment was given by the Bininj members of the committee. Normally, either the project manager or field officer would sit with Jill and Seraine in Darwin and show them the texts and watch the videos or listen to the audios submitted by participants. Early on, the Bininj women were hesitant to give much feedback, just showing their appreciation of the learners' efforts in attempting their language, but with encouragement they became more willing to identify errors and offer suggestions. The first submissions were sent written feedback based on notes taken in discussion with the Bininj women, but later audio recordings were made of them addressing the learners directly and sound files were sent. An example of feedback given for early submissions was: 'Hello [name], thank you for learning my language. Your grammar and pronunciation was all good. *Mah, bonj* (that's all).' Later examples included comments such as 'You need to practise some words; you say "*korlong*" but you should say "*korlonj*". *Bonj*.' At one of the meetings in Gunbalanya, two participants' videos were shown to the whole committee to demonstrate the kind of work that was being submitted. The Bininj committee members were delighted to see what was being produced by the non-Indigenous learners. A video was recorded of committee member Donna saying, 'We are happy for them, they are learning our Kunwok,' and this was shared via email with all the participants.

In the course feedback, this was one of the highlights for many learners:

The feedback on course activities was excellent and obviously quite a bit of effort went into giving the feedback. I really appreciated it, especially getting feedback from Jill.

## Chapter 3: Outputs and findings

### 3.1 Outputs

The following outputs are available as a result of this project.

- A digital shell containing a suite of resources co-designed with Bininj authorities for access by Australian tertiary students including:
  - a curriculum outline for four units including both linguistic and cultural components
  - digital resources (videos, audio recordings, stories, pictures, linguistic notes, in English and Bininj Kunwok)
  - arrangements for hosting the site at Charles Darwin University
  - all available from: <http://language-shell.cdu.edu.au/>.
- A parallel digital shell derived from the prototype, which can be populated by language groups around Australia who want to strengthen, promote and revitalise their languages and culture, and share it with others.
- Instructions and advice for other language groups (e.g. land councils, language centres, community groups) and universities to access and populate the shell with:
  - a suggested procedure for using WordPress and other free software to construct a course for language and culture learning
  - a report on the process of developing the shell and pilot course, including an evaluation of the development process and trial uses of the system and recommendations for others
  - an expandable glossary defining some linguistic terms—available at <http://language-shell.cdu.edu.au/linguistic-terms/>.

The insights gained from this project are amenable to implementation in a variety of institutions and locations. Owners of Australian Indigenous languages and culture can:

- copy the digital shell to upload and store the information they would like to share with other people
- think about how they might like to use that information to introduce people to its content, in formal or informal ways, on their own terms, remembering particularly that this project is aimed at allowing Australian university students to access authoritative information about Australian Indigenous languages and cultures, on the terms of the owners of those languages and cultures
- contact the CDU project team for further advice (<mailto:cathy.bow@cdu.edu.au>).

Universities can:

- work with the Bininj teacher–researchers to develop a course for credit for undergraduate or postgraduate coursework students
- use the Bininj Kunwok materials as part of a course on language learning, digital culture or other areas. The Bininj Kunmayali committee has approved such uses, but has requested that they be informed of what other groups are doing with the resources



- work with other local groups to start developing the digital shell for a particular local Indigenous language-culture
- work with postgraduate research students already researching local languages, histories and cultures in collaboration with Indigenous authorities.

Development of courses for Australian university credit would entail:

- arrangements for the ongoing payment of local elders—authorities for their participation and supervision
- arrangements for academic assessment and accreditation in terms of the university standards and practices
- agreement with the language owners over the assessment and accreditation of students
- ideally allowing cross-institutional enrolment and access to students at different universities, to support the viability of small courses.

## 3.2 Findings

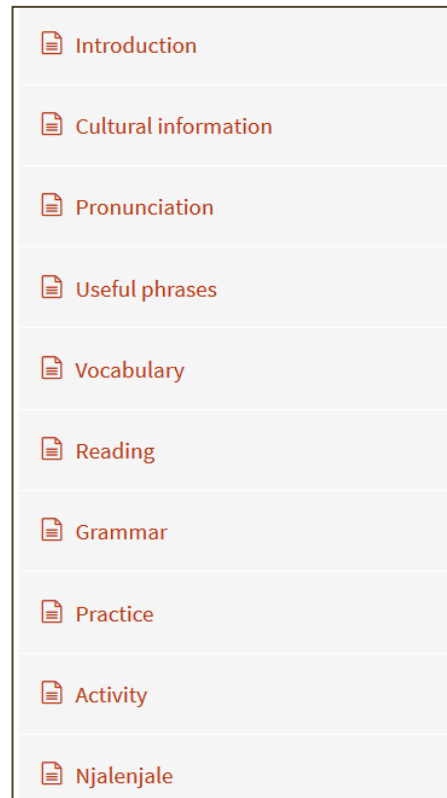
The success of the project depended on the careful collaborative process of bringing together a pedagogy and a learning management system with the authority and expertise of the senior language owners, the linguistic knowledge of the academy, and an experimental process of software identification and configuration. Lessons learnt from the process can be found in section 4.2 Evaluation. More generally, some key findings pertinent to pedagogy included the following items.

- The strong response to the call for participation indicates there is an interest in the wider community for access to Indigenous language courses.
- The development process began with the identification, engagement, and authority of a key group of language owners, who were consulted regularly and paid consultancy rates for their work as course developers and as teachers.
- It is possible to find creative ways to explain complex concepts of language and culture to make it more accessible to non-Indigenous learners.
- The curation of resources, sequencing and pacing of lessons are important aspects of course development and draw on skills of language teachers, linguists and language speakers.
- The participants wanted more opportunities for interaction with speakers of the language. This could be included in any 'tutorial' components of university courses, potentially using Skype or other online collaborative platforms to connect with language speakers in West Arnhem Land. Further investigation into the possibility of 'language buddies' (partnerships between students and Bininj speakers) may also facilitate such connections outside of university courses.
- The participants very much appreciated the bespoke videos created for the course, as well as the old Bininj language books found in the Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages.
- Many participants found that they did not have time to do as much as they had hoped, so the built-in flexibility was good for both the learners and the teachers.

- Since different students learn in different ways, there are different approaches to teaching, so it was useful to develop a suite of resources to allow for different approaches to teaching and learning.
- There have been several suggestions for further uses of the materials in induction/orientation programs for new staff working in West Arnhem Land, plus as a means of engaging Bininj students at schools in the area.

The following findings pertain to the learning management system.

- Choose a platform that allows flexibility—of look and feel as well as functionality and interoperability.
- While wordpress.com is simpler to set up on a single machine, it does not have the flexibility of the hosted wordpress.org setup.
- Wordpress.org takes some technical capacity to set up and may involve costs for hosting if hosted outside of an institution.
- There are WordPress plug-ins available for almost any feature imaginable.
- Blackboard and Moodle are also worth considering if a university already uses these, as long as it is possible for language authorities from outside the university to control content.
- Make sure any resources created on, or embedded in, the platform can be reused elsewhere if the platform changes or a different platform is selected.
- There will be issues with any platform and software selected, so allow time and patience to resolve these.



**Figure 11: Screenshot of lesson menu in LearnPress**

## Chapter 4: Impact, evaluation and dissemination

### 4.1 Impact

The project attracted local and national attention from the outset. Over 130 people logged in to the course and used some of the materials to expand their understanding of Bininj language and culture. They gave very positive feedback and indicated that they wanted to continue learning and developing connections in the Bininj community. The ANU has already expressed interest in supporting the expansion of the units to be made accessible for a full unit of undergraduate study beginning in Semester 1, 2019 with another NT language centre keen to develop their own course using the shell template.

This project has, however, only developed a proof of concept, that it is possible to negotiate a flexible online system for teaching Aboriginal languages using Aboriginal pedagogies, under the authority of their owners. While these are still early days for impact assessment, a proposal is given in *Appendix G: Impact statement*.

A key impact has been on the language authorities and their communities, as attested in the following feedback from members of the Bininj Kunmayali Committee (translated from Kunwinjku):

It's the same when they teach us - "Do it this way, this way, that way etc." "Don't go there," or "Avoid behaving in that way", – these are the sort of laws we have. We Bininj people say, "Yes, non-Aboriginal people have laws, and we won't break them. We won't go against their ways of doing things. We will obey their laws." So just as Balanda people should obey our laws, we should obey theirs – it's the same thing, and we can all learn and share our knowledge with each other. We teach them, they teach us as we spend time together. But their ways and our ways are very different from each other. But later as we learn, we can properly see and understand each other's different ways of doing things.

*Jill Nganjmirra, Darwin, August 2016*

We will all benefit if Balanda can see our laws and what we know, and listen to us when we learn from each other. So we are learning both kinds of knowledge and laws - from both Balanda and Bininj. This will strengthen us and our future generations. And so with regards to Balanda, it's a good thing if they are helped to learn our language. Then they will see how in the past the old people used to do things, work and listen to each other, and trust in each other and in our laws and culture. And now we want to keep that going forever, keep learning these ways so they'll continue on for the benefit of everyone.

*Donna Nadjamerrek, Gunbalanya, August 2016*

There were several indicators of a climate of readiness for change in relation to this project. Firstly, the level of interest expressed in learning an Indigenous language online was far greater than anticipated. Secondly, a group has formed within the Australian Linguistics

Society to explore further opportunities to promote Indigenous language courses at the higher education level (Australian Linguistics Society, 2016). Thirdly, a number of other language communities have expressed interest in teaching their language, but have lacked an accessible framework in which to explore this.

Strategies for engaging with stakeholders throughout this project have involved close collaboration with the Bininj authorities, including several meetings across the year in Jabiru, Gunbalanya and Darwin, and these connections will continue through the Bininj Kunwok Language Project Reference Committee. All participants in the pilot course will be sent copies of the final report and invited to participate in any further course development. Beyond the pilot course itself, the course materials will remain available online and the shell project will continue to be promoted through conferences, publications, social media and other media channels. A set of instructions will be made available to other interested parties in how to use the shell to develop their own courses.

## 4.2 Evaluation

Feedback was collected from all the participants using the following instruments:

1. an online forum which was active throughout the course
2. a post-course survey questionnaire sent to all participants (available at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BKshell>)
3. semistructured telephone interviews with 12 selected learners—see *Appendix F: Interview guide for participant feedback*.

The following themes emerged from the evaluation and feedback process, with quotes from participants (extended analysis and quotes will be available at <http://language-shell.cdu.edu.au/report-on-pilot-project/>):

**a. Interaction:** Participants enjoyed the flexibility of the online platform, but missed the opportunity to interact with speakers of the language.

- ‘It was good to be able to just do it whenever I had a bit of time, to know it was there and just go and do little bits and pieces rather than knowing that you have to go at a certain time, although that helps as well in terms of knowing you have to do it at that time, but good to be able to do it whenever there was a moment.’
- ‘I kind of just felt it needed a formalised process of having those face-to-face contacts as well. So I think the online approach is really good because it provides access for a much wider range of people, but it still needs to have some sort of structured face-to-face contact as well.’

**b. Cultural information:** Participants appreciated the inclusion of cultural information, particularly about skin systems and kinship and their associated terms.

- ‘I found the most relevant and probably the most helpful is all the kinship and skin names and what people call each other according to their relationships to people. That really helped me understand how people were related in the community and how people refer to each other, that was probably the most useful for me.’
- ‘It’s just fascinating this whole area, and if you don’t have the language you can’t learn the cultural stuff. That’s the reality, there’s only so much kinship you can understand without the language.’

**c. Multimedia materials:** Many participants commented on the value of the video and audio materials in the course.

- 'I really enjoyed that you could press a button and hear the phrases and just repeat it, and you could keep doing that.'
- 'The videos are fantastic ... you feel like they're speaking to you, they're not a robot giving you language lessons.'
- 'I really liked having the Bininj talking and having the video stuff and talking about what's important to them.'

**d. Appreciation:** Several participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to learn this language, and thanked the facilitators for making it available.

- 'Thank you very much for taking this on and giving the opportunity to actually learn a bit more. I really do hope that when it's out there available ... I think people will want to be able to have access to or have ability to learn language and this is going to help the situation.'
- 'Thanks for putting it together, thanks for everyone's hard work and considerate feedback. Somehow I hope it will be back bigger and better than ever!'

**e. Additional materials:** Several participants commented on the use of materials outside the course (such as flashcard apps, grammar references, readings, etc.), and some suggested other materials they would have liked to use (such as wordlists, a dictionary).

- 'I created flashcards on Anki. I loved reading the Living Archive books—it really helped cement the context of using words. More of that would be welcome. A dictionary of words in the course would be helpful as I had to compile my own in the end in order to go back when I forgot a word that was being used again.'

**f. Future engagement:** This covered a number of concepts, including ideas about the project reaching beyond the tertiary education sector.

- 'I will incorporate more language within my interactions with Bininj and hopefully this will improve my relationships with the community.'
- 'Staff should be inducted into the community they're in, and even if they don't learn any language, they've been exposed to it and understand that there is another language here. I think this course certainly does that.'
- 'I think it would be great to see it dramatically expanded because I think really in this day and age everyone in Australia should be learning some language or other and it would be good to see this sort of programme extended to other languages and extended in general so there was more content involved.'

## 4.3 Dissemination

The CDU Bininj Kunwok website has been set up to disseminate detailed information of all aspects of the project, including an email contact address for enquiries, to be available at least until the end of 2019.

The project has already been presented at the following local, national and international academic conference forums (slides are available at <http://language-shell.cdu.edu.au/presentations/>):

- Top End Linguistics Circle, Darwin, 26 August 2016
- Australian Linguistics Society 47<sup>th</sup> annual conference, Monash University, 7–9 December 2016
- International Conference on Language Documentation and Conservation, University of Hawaii at Manoa, 2–5 March 2017.

It has also been accepted for presentation at the Puliima National Indigenous Language & Technology Forum in Cairns in October 2017. This report will be revised for publication in an academic journal.

The project was featured in a press release from CDU when it was first funded (see *Appendix H: Media release*) that resulted in an interview on ABC Radio Darwin, and later there was a feature in the local *West Arnhem Wire* magazine, which is widely distributed around the Bininj language area (see *Appendix I: Feature article in West Arnhem Wire*).

The project team will continue to work with the Bininj language authorities and would be happy to assist in further trials and offering the course for other groups. More theoretical work into the epistemological, pedagogical and sociolinguistic aspects of digitally mediated teaching of Australian Indigenous languages continues.

#### **4.4 Engagement with previous OLT projects**

The current project addresses issues raised in a previous OLT project (ID13-2845) that identified the lack of opportunity for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to undertake studies at university level in Indigenous languages as ‘of specific national concern for Equity for Indigenous Australians’ (Simpson et al., 2016, p. 1). That project’s aims also included ‘making units of study in Indigenous Australian languages a priority for sharing across universities’ (Simpson et al., 2016, p. 14). Similarly, the project that established the Languages & Cultures Network for Australian Universities (LE10-1732) called on all universities ‘to follow the example of the Universities of Adelaide, South Australia and Sydney as well as Charles Darwin University by introducing the teaching of Australian Indigenous languages—for the benefit of the nation and all students’ (Hajek & Lloyd-Smith, 2011, p.1). The project also continues the work led by 2008 ALTC National Teaching Fellow Professor Michael Christie, whose innovative work on Teaching from Country (Christie, 2010; Christie, Guyula, Gurruwiwi, & Greateorex, 2013) underpins the current project.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

As noted in the opening section, there are many barriers to the development and delivery of courses in Indigenous languages in Australia. Through this project the team has demonstrated that it is possible to overcome some of these barriers by creating an online shell template that can be populated with resources developed by language authorities and others, sequenced in such a way that makes it accessible to non-Indigenous learners, and delivered at reasonable cost through freely available, easy to use and flexible software. The strong level of interest shown in this project by language learners and others wanting to share language and culture online suggests that there is a groundswell of support for further development of such resources. It is hoped that this project will enable and support further initiatives in this largely underdeveloped area.

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# Appendix A: Certification

## ***Certification by Deputy Vice-Chancellor (or equivalent)***

I certify that all parts of the final report for this OLT grant/fellowship (remove as appropriate) provide an accurate representation of the implementation, impact and findings of the project, and that the report is of publishable quality.

Name: Professor Lawrence Cram, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President Research and Research Training, Charles Darwin University

Date: 28 April 2017

## Appendix B: Tools used and recommendations

### *Tools used for the creation of materials*

All these technologies are available either for low cost or free (with paid versions available for additional features) and can be used by amateurs in this area with reasonable results. Clearly better results would be possible with more skilled technicians and higher quality tools, but these are likely to add to the budget.

- Recording
  - [Zoom](#) HD recorder
  - Olympus digital camera
  - Lapel microphone
- Audio editing
  - [Audacity](#)
- Transcription
  - [Inqscribe](#) (the paid version was used but there is a free version with reduced functionality)
- Translation
  - [Aikuma](#)
- Simple animations (e.g. comic and family trees)
  - [Whiteboardcast](#)
- Video editing
  - [Videopad](#) (allows import of subtitles from Inqscribe)
  - [Windows Movie Maker](#)
  - [iMovie](#) for Mac

### *Recommendations for the creation of materials*

- Use separate microphone close to speaker where possible
- Avoid recording outside – wind and background noise affect quality
- Natural is better, don't get 'forced' material
- Record in language where possible – subtitles can be added later
- Record wordlists, book readings, etc. in single file, can always edit later
- Aim for the best quality with the smallest file size
- Use useful metadata and appropriate filing system for easy access
- Ensure reliable and regular backups

# Appendix C: Expressions of interest

## FREE SHORT COURSE IN LEARNING BININJ KUNWOK

Researchers from Charles Darwin University are developing and testing an online language course for teaching and learning Indigenous languages. This first project focuses on the family of languages of West Arnhem Land known as Bininj Kunwok.

You are invited to participate in this research, which will involve spending 3-4 hours per week over a 4 week period between September and November 2016. The course will be done in your own time, and all the materials will be provided online, so you will need access to a computer with an internet connection. You don't have to pay for the course, and you won't receive any payment for helping with the research. You will be asked to give feedback about your involvement, through an online survey and some interview questions, which will be done by phone during and after the course.

Please note that this is a research project and there is no formal credit available for this course. You will need to sign a consent form to participate. By completing and submitting this form, you are expressing an interest to be involved in this research, and successful applicants will be sent further information early in August.

First Name

Last Name

E-mail \*

Phone number

Location \*

Why do you want to participate in this research? \*

Do you have access to a computer with Internet? \* Yes / No

Can you commit to 3-4 hours of study per week over a 4 week period between Sept-Nov 2016? \* Yes / No

Are you available to give feedback via an online survey and via a phone interview? \* Yes No

Please tell us your highest level of education

\* no formal education / primary school / high school up to year 10 / high school to year 11 or 12 / TAFE certificate or diploma / undergraduate degree / postgraduate degree

Current work situation:

Please include any involvement with Aboriginal people, particularly Bininj

Do you already know any Bininj Kunwok language? Please describe \*

Do you know any other language(s)? Please describe \*

<https://form.jotform.co/61727773179872>

## Appendix D: Plain language statement

**RESEARCH PROJECT:** Activating Community-based Indigenous Language and Culture Resources for University teaching

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Prof Michael Christie, Northern Institute, Charles Darwin University

**ADDITIONAL RESEARCHERS:** Dr Murray Garde, Australian National University  
Lois Nadjamerrek, Bininj Kunwok Language Project  
Cathy Bow, PhD Candidate, Charles Darwin University  
Andy Peart, Charles Darwin University

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:** We are doing this study to develop a digital shell (which is basically a customised website) through which Indigenous authorities can share and teach their language and culture on their own terms. A pilot version of the shell involves Bininj Kunwok elders sharing their knowledge online. We are recruiting participants through the [bininjkenwok.org.au](http://bininjkenwok.org.au) mailing list. We invite you to participate in the course to learn about Bininj language and culture and to give your feedback. The research is funded by the Australian government's Office of Learning and Teaching to support best practice for teaching in the universities.

**BENEFITS OF THE STUDY:** This research will involve Indigenous authorities finding appropriate ways to share their knowledge with a wider audience using digital technology. Because Indigenous languages and cultures are in danger of being lost, it is important for appropriate authorities to decide how to share their knowledge with others, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. This study may benefit you in providing the opportunity for you to learn about Bininj Kunwok language and culture through trying the digital shell prepared for this project. We also plan to share it with other communities and language groups so they can share their knowledge online.

**WHAT WILL BE EXPECTED OF YOU?:** If you do decide to participate in this project we will ask you to complete a short online course teaching Bininj Kunwok language and culture. This will be done on the internet, with weekly tasks set over a 4 week period, which you can do in your own time, any time between September-November 2016. We think it will take 2-3 hours of your time each week over this period.

During the course you will watch short videos, listen to audio recordings or read information, then complete short assessment tasks, such as reflection, simple translation, multiple choice or short answer questions. While we might give 'grades' to some tasks, what we really want to know is how well the teaching website works, rather than your performance as a student.

During and after the trial period, we will ask you some questions about your experience using the site, such as "how long did you spend on each activity? Which activities did you like best? Was it easy to navigate around the site?". We will ask these in an online survey, then we will invite some people to have an interview (either face-to-face or by telephone) which we will record, to understand more about your experience. The survey and interview are expected to take around 15-30 minutes and will be arranged at a time that suits you.

**RISKS:** We don't think there are any risks to you as a participant in this research project. We are testing the usefulness of the website rather than your 'success' at learning, so nothing bad will happen to you even if you do not finish all the activities. This project will not have any impact on any existing study programs in which you may be enrolled. If you do experience any concerns about your learning in this course, you can contact the CDU Counselling service on 8946 6288.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** We will record your response, but will keep it private, so no one outside the research team will know who said what. We will need to collect some information about you to help our research, we won't put your name in the results, or any information that will identify you. We will keep all the information for 5 years and then destroy it, unless you're happy for us to use it for other research in the future – you can tick a box on the consent form if you agree to this.

**PARTICIPATION:** Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary and you are free to say no to being involved. You will also have the opportunity to withdraw from the project at any stage while you're doing the course. Once we've analysed the results we can't remove your information, so you would need to tell us before the end of 2016 if you don't want to be included. We won't pay you anything for your participation.

**RESULTS OF THE STUDY:** At the end of the course, we will give you feedback about your participation in the online course, including any results from the activities. You can then look at these results and your comments about the course, to make sure that you are happy for us to include them (anonymously) in our research.

We will put together everyone's results and feedback to analyse them, and we plan to publish the results in an academic journal, and talk about the research at academic conferences. The study will also form part of Cathy Bow's PhD research. We will send you emails about any publications or reports so you can read them. Because your results and comments may be useful for other research in the future, you can say if you're willing to make your information available for future research as appropriate. You can still participate in this research even if you say no to this question on the consent form.

**PERSON TO CONTACT:** If you have questions about this project, please contact Cathy Bow by email at: [cathy.bow@cdu.edu.au](mailto:cathy.bow@cdu.edu.au) or by telephone: 8946 6876, or Michael Christie by email: [michael.christie@cdu.edu.au](mailto:michael.christie@cdu.edu.au).

If you have any questions or concerns that you do not want to direct to the researcher, you can contact the Executive Officer of the Charles Darwin University Human Research Ethics Committee on (08) 89466923, on the toll free number, 1800 466 215 or by email, [ethics@cdu.edu.au](mailto:ethics@cdu.edu.au). The Executive Officer can pass on any concerns to appropriate people within the University.

**ETHICAL GUIDELINES:** This project will be done according to the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, as defined by the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia. This project has been approved by the Charles Darwin University Human Research Ethics Committee.

If you agree to participate in this research, please sign the attached Consent form and return it via email to [cathy.bow@cdu.edu.au](mailto:cathy.bow@cdu.edu.au). You can keep this form.

## Appendix E: Consent form

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the Plain Language Statement and understand my role in this research project, its purpose, risks and benefits.

- I understand that I will participate in an online training course for Bininj Kunwok language and culture over four weeks, and give comments for feedback during and after the course.
- I understand that I may withdraw my involvement and my permission at any time prior to 1 January 2017, with no bad consequences for me.
- I understand that my participation in this project is purely voluntary and I will receive no payment for being involved.
- I have had a chance to ask questions about the project, and I am comfortable with the answers that I have been given. I know that I can ask more questions whenever I like.
- I understand that my involvement in this project will have no effect on any study program I am currently enrolled in or may be involved in any time in the future, either at Charles Darwin University or any other institution.
- I understand that my results in the online course are not the focus of the study, so my 'success' or 'failure' will not affect my participation in the research.
- I understand that my participation in the online course, as well as my responses to questions about the course will be recorded and used anonymously for publication in research articles, reports or theses.
- I understand that the researchers will keep my information confidential so far as the law allows and that I cannot be identified in the research outcomes.
- I freely give my consent to participate in this project under the conditions written in the Plain Language Statement and this consent form.

I agree that my results and comments can be made available for future research as appropriate:

Yes / No (Your response to this question will not affect your participation)

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

**RESEARCH PROJECT:** Activating Community-based Indigenous Language and Culture Resources for University teaching

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Prof Michael Christie, Northern Institute, Charles Darwin University

**ADDITIONAL RESEARCHERS:** Dr Murray Garde, Australian National University

Lois Nadjamerrek, Bininj Kunwok Language Project

Cathy Bow, PhD Candidate, Charles Darwin University

Andy Peart, Charles Darwin University

If you have any questions or concerns that you do not want to direct to the researcher, you are invited to contact the Executive Officer of the Charles Darwin University Human Research Ethics Committee on (08) 89466923, on the toll free number, 1800 466 215 or by email, [ethics@cdu.edu.au](mailto:ethics@cdu.edu.au). The Executive Officer can pass on any concerns to appropriate officers within the University.

Please note that submission of this completed form (including typed name or electronic signature) indicates your consent to participate in this research in accordance with the information set out in this document and the corresponding Plain Language Statement.

This project has been approved by the Charles Darwin University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Please return the signed form via email to [cathy.bow@cdu.edu.au](mailto:cathy.bow@cdu.edu.au) by 26 August, 2016

## Appendix F: Interview guide for participant feedback

- Thanks for your time
- I'm recording the interview
- Your responses will be confidential – your name will not be associated with any responses
- Any questions or are you happy to proceed?

(Select questions based on responses to questionnaire regarding previous experience, interaction with others, etc.) <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BKshell>

1. You've had some interaction with Indigenous languages before. How was this online experience different?  
**OR** You've had no interaction with Indigenous languages before. How did this experience meet your expectations?
2. How did the online environment affect your learning?
3. You've had some experience learning a language online before. How was this experience different?  
**OR** You've had no experience learning a language online before. How did this experience meet your expectations?
4. How did difficulties in the language itself (grammar, pronunciation, etc.) affect your learning?
5. You have opportunities to interact with Bininj – how do you see this course impacting these opportunities and relationships?  
**OR** You have no opportunities to interact with Bininj – how do you think this course would impact any opportunities you may have in the future?
6. You interacted with another learner/speaker – how did this impact your experience?  
**OR** You didn't use your language with other people – how did this impact your experience?
7. Do you plan to continue learning Kunwinjku or any other Indigenous language? How will you continue? What would keep you going?
8. Have you learnt anything about language itself?
9. Was there anything unexpected/ Did anything surprise you about the language or culture? (or the course?)
10. What benefits are there to learning an Indigenous language? How are these affected by the online process of learning?
11. Any other comments?

Thanks again for your time.



## Appendix G: Impact statement

	<b>Project completion</b>	<b>Six months post completion</b>	<b>12 months post-completion</b>	<b>24 months post-completion</b>
<b>(1) Team members</b>	Engagement of Bininj authorities in dissemination of language and cultural material through course. Development of literacy and technical skills for Bininj contributors.	Continued engagement with Bininj on future development. Collate and analyse feedback. Submit report to funding body.	Consultation with Bininj on expanded course for ANU. Project manager incorporates project into PhD.	Engagement of Bininj in teaching and other involvement in expanded course at ANU. Project manager's PhD continues.
<b>(2) Immediate students</b>	Deepened understanding of Bininj language and culture	Continued access to materials (many students indicated they wanted to continue learning post completion)		Invited to participate in trial of expanded course at ANU.
<b>(3) Spreading the word</b>	Presentation at conferences – TELC, ALS	International presentation ICLDC conference, interest from US educators.  Interest from other Australian language groups.  Continued interest in course from various sources.	Anticipated publication of article in international journal.  Anticipated development of Kriol course using shell.	Promotion of semester course through Australian Linguistics Society.  Anticipate ongoing development of courses with other language groups.
<b>(4) Narrow opportunistic adoption</b>	Participants created own resources.	Suggestions re incorporation into orientation / induction courses.	Pursue opportunities to develop resources for other contexts in West Arnhem.	
<b>(5) Narrow systemic adoption</b>		Interest in developing course to full accredited semester unit	Development of additional curriculum and materials.	Expected roll-out of full semester course at ANU
<b>(6) Broad opportunistic adoption</b>		Discussions with other institutions about offering this or similar courses	Promotion of shell and courses to universities and language centres.	Cross-institutional enrolment available to students from other institutions

	<b>Project completion</b>	<b>Six months post completion</b>	<b>12 months post-completion</b>	<b>24 months post-completion</b>
<b>(7) Broad systemic adoption</b>				Wider availability of Indigenous language courses at tertiary level

# Appendix H: Media release

## Indigenous languages one click away from students

25-Jan-2016

A major Charles Darwin University project will aim to make learning an Indigenous language easier for university students across Australia.

Project officer Cathy Bow said the project aimed to preserve endangered Indigenous languages by encouraging students to learn about them, under the authority of Indigenous knowledge owners.

Ms Bow and project leader, Professor of Education Michael Christie are based at the Northern Institute at CDU.

The project recently received a \$40,000 Federal Government Office of Learning and Teaching grant, and will provide Indigenous knowledge owners with online platforms to share languages, histories, art, knowledge and culture with students.

“Most Indigenous languages in Australia are endangered,” Ms Bow said.

“We hope to design an online ‘shell’ that will increase and develop Indigenous knowledge availability, which is driven and authorised by the traditional language owners.”

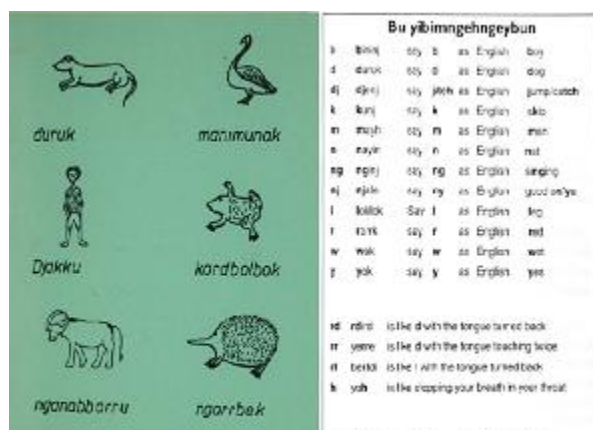
She said students also would have the ability to directly engage with knowledge owners involved in the project by negotiating through their universities.

The project will begin with a pilot program on the North Australian language of Bininj Kunwok, spoken in Kakadu and West Arnhem Land regions with about 2000 native speakers.

“CDU has a long history of collaborative research with Indigenous communities and promotes Indigenous knowledge education through its Yolngu Studies course and other programs,” Ms Bow said.

Northern Institute researchers have also developed a digital archive of about 2,700 publicly accessible endangered literature written in NT Indigenous languages. To view the Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages, visit W: [cd�.edu.au/laal](http://cd�.edu.au/laal)

<http://www.cd�.edu.au/newsroom/olt-grant>



**Figure 12: Extracts from Kunwinjku books in the Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages**

## Appendix I: Feature article in *West Arnhem Wire*

<http://westarnhem.nt.gov.au/bininj-kunwok-language-chosen-pilot-program/>

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West Arnhem Wire - Fortnightly news



Ngalgwakadj Jill Nganjimarra is assisting to create online learning materials in Bininj Kunwok as part of Charles Darwin University's pilot program for Indigenous authorities to share language and culture.

### BININJ KUNWOK LANGUAGE CHOSEN FOR PILOT PROGRAM

Charles Darwin University (CDU) is currently working with West Arnhem's Bininj Kunwok Language Group to develop an online language course in Bininj Kunwok.

The course is a pilot program by CDU which is working to produce a digital 'shell' website through which Indigenous authorities can share their language and culture with university students.

As a group which has already been sharing language materials online, the Bininj Kunwok Language Group was selected to develop this pilot program with CDU, working with linguist Murray Garde of ANU.

*"We are proud of our language and want to help other people to learn..."*

More than 150 people expressed an interest to be volunteer learners of the Bininj Kunwok course which consists of four units covering cultural information, grammar, reading, vocabulary, useful phrases, pronunciation and an activity.

A committee of Bininj authorities has been overseeing the project and contributing short videos and audio recordings as online learning materials for the course which began in September and



Charles Darwin University are currently running an online pilot course with the Bininj Kunwok Language Group.

will finish at the end of November.

Ngalgwakadj Jill Nganjimarra said, "We are proud of our language and want to help other people to learn".

CDU's Cathy Bow, who is the main coordinator and designer of the online course, said the research will involve getting feedback from those involved in the course to see what works well and not so well.

The online 'shell' website can then be shared with other groups interested in developing similar courses. Discussions with universities will establish how such resources can be incorporated into tertiary courses.

The research is funded by the Australian Government's Office of Learning and Teaching.

More information on the Bininj Kunwok Language Group is available at [bininj.kunwok.org.au](http://bininj.kunwok.org.au) website and the Bininj Kunwok Language Group Facebook page.

The West Arnhem Wire | 15 - 28 October 2016