

18 November 2019

The Elder, the broken spear and James Cook: history from a different angle

James Cook's Endeavour Journal (1768-71) and an Aboriginal oral history will provide a unique view of the British explorer's historic voyage in a new State Library of Queensland exhibition opening this week.

Spoken: celebrating Queensland languages exhibition will showcase shore-to-ship perspectives of this pivotal time in history alongside an exploration of the survival and revival of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

Academic and Bulgun Warra man, Harold Ludwick, describes how a Guugu Yimithirr Elder used a broken spear as a peace offering to Cook and his men, moored off the coast of what is now known as Cooktown, following a tussle over a female turtle on the deck of the Endeavour.

His oral account complements Cook's observations in the 251-year old journal which is on loan from the National Library of Australia and is one of the nation's most important treasures.

Spoken brings together stories, art and collections to profile the importance of International Year of Indigenous Languages and highlights State Library's work in sharing and preserving the stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Word lists buried in centuries-old documents like Cook's journal, State Library's Archibald Meston Papers (1897-1924) and Charles Wray Finch Papers (1842-60) hold the key to the revival of endangered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

Exhibition highlights:

- James Cook's Endeavour Journal (1768-71)
- Messmate bark canoe from Aurukun (circa 1935)
- Sun Dress - contemporary wearable Aboriginal art from Central Queensland
- Margaret Lawrie Collection artwork (1950s-70s)
- Milkwood sculptures of camp dogs and marine creatures
- Unique miniature pocket globe with shark skin case (1774)
- Immersive photographic experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Rare maps

Quotes from the Minister for the Arts Leeanne Enoch:

"This exhibition supports the further awakening and acknowledgement of languages that have been spoken on this land for thousands of generations.

"Language binds us to people and places, and helps us interpret the world in which we live.

"And this is why this exhibition, and recognising the International Year of Indigenous Languages, is so important, because it showcases the strength of First Nations oral culture and continues a rich legacy for future generations."

Media enquiries

State Library of Queensland Communications team
media@slq.qld.gov.au | 07 3842 9847

Interviews and images are available upon request.

Quotes from State Librarian and CEO Vicki McDonald:

“As custodian of Queensland’s memory, it is imperative all historical perspectives are preserved, shared and understood.”

“Cook’s journal, along with significant documents from our own collections, uncover precious word lists which help ensure the survival and revival of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.”

“I hope this exhibition sparks a deeper understanding of the beauty and diversity of Queensland first languages.”

Spoken: celebrating Queensland languages

21 November – 19 April

Open daily | Free entry

slq Gallery, level 2 | State Library of Queensland, Cultural Centre, South Bank

slq.qld.gov.au/whats-on | #slqSpoken #IYIL2019 (until 31 December 2019)

Visitors are also invited to a new showcase in kuril dhagun (at State Library) which includes a collection of the earliest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children’s books published in Queensland, helping to highlight the importance of sharing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island languages through storytelling. First edition copies of *The Rainbow Serpent* and *The Legends of Moonie Jarl* are on display.

Jarjum Stories

19 October – 10 May

Open daily | Free entry

kuril dhagun, level 1 | State Library of Queensland, Cultural Centre, South Bank

slq.qld.gov.au/whats-on | #slqJarjum #IYIL2019 (until 31 December 2019)

Media enquiries

State Library of Queensland Communications team
media@slq.qld.gov.au | 07 3842 9847

Interviews and images are available upon request.