

# Kimberley Interpreting Service

[www.wn.com.au/mirima](http://www.wn.com.au/mirima)

NAATI Interpreters for Aboriginal Languages

Tel: 08 9169 3161

Issue 1

February 2001

## How it started...

*Background to Kimberley Interpreting Service*

### **Keeley Palmer**

Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre

There are over 40 traditional indigenous languages in the Kimberley Region and many Aboriginal people speak English as a second, third, or even fourth language. Aboriginal people who are able to deal with everyday matters in English may experience difficulty when faced with the 'high' English or specific technical terminology employed by doctors, lawyers and police officers. Aboriginal staff or family members are often called upon to act as interpreters and indigenous language centres in the area (Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek and Kununurra) have received many requests for help over the years.

The Kimberley Interpreting Service is an initiative of the Mirima Council Aboriginal Corporation. For 12 years Mirima Council have operated a language and culture centre (Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring MDWG) in Kununurra primarily aimed at maintaining the traditional languages for the area. In 1997 they began supporting Kriol speakers who were interested in becoming accredited interpreters, and arranged for lecturers from Batchelor Institute of Tertiary Education in the Northern Territory to hold workshops in preparation for the NAATI test. ☞

In 1999 two language workers from Mirima <sup>*continued on page 2*</sup> Dawang Woorlab

## HIGHLIGHTS INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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## Kimberley Interpreting Service has launched new website

*Now you can book an interpreter online*

### **Tea Dieterich**

Kimberley Interpreting Service

The Kimberley Interpreting Service launched their new website in December 2000: [www.wn.com.au/mirima](http://www.wn.com.au/mirima)

The website informs about accreditation and competence of the interpreters, languages and who may need Aboriginal interpreters and gives suggestions and tips on how to work with Aboriginal interpreters. The interpreters tell their stories on why they became interpreters. The website also features an online booking form, a detailed language map of the Kimberley Region, a comprehensive list of interpreters as well as contact details for all Language Centres and the Adult Education Centres in the Region. ☞



*NAATI interpreter Annette Chunama at work in the Kununurra District Hospital.*

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## Kimberley Interpreting Service

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gerring successfully attained NAATI accreditation and work began in raising awareness of the need for interpreters in the local community. Meetings were held with various government agencies in town, including Centrelink, hospital, police, courthouse, as part of a feasibility study. The overwhelming response was that interpreters were needed in the area.

Similarly, Kimberley Language Resource Centre in Halls Creek and Karrayili Adult Education Centre in Fitzroy Crossing ran two interpreter training courses in conjunction with Central Metropolitan College of TAFE which resulted in the accreditation of 20 interpreters in Walmajarri, Jaru, Kija, Kukatja and Kriol.

In 2000, Mirima Council applied to the Western Australian Department of Employment and Training for funding as part of the Enterprise Initiatives Program. The money was used to establish the Kimberley Interpreting Service (KIS): an organisation that aims to raise awareness of the need for interpreters in the local community; act as an agent matching interpreters to jobs; provide training and professional support to interpreters and the professionals who use them; and ensure the ongoing future of the service.

The service employs a part-time project officer who has been working to establish a framework in which the service can operate. This has included preparing promotional material (a web site, newsletter and brochure), developing an administrative system, meeting with interpreters and potential interpreters to discuss their training and employment needs, and building links with government agencies who are likely to use the service and organisations who could help and support the service (NAATI, Northern Territory Aboriginal Interpreter Service, etc).

KIS has a full program for 2001. There will be more jobs for interpreters, refresher courses for interpreters and new courses through Batchelor. If you think your organisation may need to use an interpreter or you are interested to find out more please feel free to visit our website ([www.wn.com.au/mirima](http://www.wn.com.au/mirima)) or contact us on the numbers in this newsletter. ☞



KLRC Chairperson Bonnie Degan with committee members in BME.

## Meeting with KLRC and Mirima Council

*Mirima Council hold presentation at KLRC Committee Meeting*

**Keeley Palmer**  
MDWG

The Kimberley Interpreting Service (KIS) is a joint-initiative between the Mirima Council Aboriginal Corporation (as part of Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring) and Kimberley Language Resource Centre (KLRC). At the recent KLRC committee meeting in Broome Mirima Council Chairperson, David Newry, MDWG Coordinator, Keeley Palmer, and KIS Project Officer, Tea Dietterich met with Committee members of KLRC and gave an overview of the Kimberley Interpreting Service project.

The presentation began by showing the video made by Diwurruwurru-Jaru (Katherine Regional Language Centre) entitled 'Nomo Humbug'. The video depicts the use of interpreters in several situations including at the police station, in hospital and social security and provides basic information about how to use interpreters.

Keeley Palmer then gave a background as to why Mirima Council applied for funding for the project and what the goals of the project are. Tea Dietterich explained what had been achieved so far in a short time, drawing particular attention to the website and the brochure, the interpreter training planned for 2001, and the interpreting jobs already completed. The meeting concluded with discussions between Mirima Council Chairperson David Newry, and KLRC committee members about the future direction of the service. If KIS is to truly service the Kimberley region and all its traditional language speakers it must ensure it has input from both language centres and adult education centres. It is hoped that MDWG and KLRC will be able to work closely on this project in the coming years. The KLRC committee resolved to discuss this matter further and make a decision about the best way to support the service at their next meeting. ☞



KIS Project Officer Tea Dietterich and Mirima Council Chairperson David Newry at the KLRC meeting in Broome.

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## Goals of KIS

- **Work with, and on behalf of, Aboriginal language interpreters to ensure ongoing employment and professional development**
- **Liaise with, and educate government agencies, communities and the wider public about interpreting issues**
- **Coordinate and support the training of more Aboriginal language interpreters**
- **Network and liaise with other relevant organisations and interpreting services**

## Legal Interpreters most in demand

Ministry of Justice, Kununurra Courthouse and the District Court in Perth have been booking Aboriginal interpreters on a regular basis through KIS, since the Kimberley Interpreting Service opened its central booking service in November 2000. Lawyers request interpreters as well as the Aboriginal Legal Services and the WA Legal Service. The Victim Support Service plans to start using this service as well.

## Interpreter Diploma Course

The Batchelor Institute is running a five week course for obtaining an Interpreter Diploma with NAATI accreditation this year. The course which consists of two 2-week and one 1-week blocks will start beginning of March and will be held in Batchelor. Aboriginal people from the Kimberley Region are eligible for participation in the course with all expenses paid for. The course covers travel expenses, accommodation, tuition, all meals and study material.

## New Language Service in Kununurra

*Employment and Training Minister, Mike Board, hands over a cheque to a new State Government-funded Aboriginal interpreter service*

### Kimberley Echo

25 May 2000

A new State Government-funded Aboriginal interpreter service is set to keep communication flowing between traditional groups and English-speaking residents in the Kimberley.

Employment and Training Minister, Mike Board, handed over a cheque at the weekend for almost \$83,000 to Kununurra Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre to establish the facility.

Mr Board said while most Government departments and community agencies have budgets to pay for interpreters there had been no coordination of the provision of their services.

This provided little job security for the 20 qualified interpreters, mostly women, in the region and made it difficult to source people with the appropriate skills.

“A feasibility study by the Department of Training and Employment, funded last year, convincingly demonstrated the need for this type of service in the Kimberley – a one-stop venue where people requiring an interpreter could be provided with a qualified person in their local area,” the Minister said.

The funding will employ a project manager for 12 months to work with interpreters, language centres, and government agencies to establish the service.

Once set up, the Kimberley Interpreting Service will act as the coordinating agency for interpreters and operate on a user-pays basis.



Employment and Training Minister, Mike Board and Mirima Council Chairperson David Newry after receiving the cheque for the Interpreting Service

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## LOOKING FOR BLOKES!

### WE NEED YOU....

Kimberley Interpreting Service is urgently looking for male interpreters for Aboriginal languages. You don't need to have "a ticket", i.e. an accreditation from NAATI. If you have some or any experience in acting as an interpreter for other Aboriginal people, we would like to include you in our list.

### COME FORWARD...

If you have no experience at all, we can help you to participate in an interpreter course. Just contact us and find out more about it. We have regular short interpreter lessons in the Mirima Language Centre every week and you can simply come and listen to see what's going on. If you like it, you too can become an interpreter.

### YOU'LL LOVE IT...

It is great to help other people when they are in trouble. Without you, they may not ever get justice because they don't understand what the lawyer really says. Or they cannot have their own say about their health, if they don't understand what the doctor explains. ☺

## 2001 International Year of Language

*Open Days at the Mirima Language and Culture Centre*

The Year 2001 has been declared by the United Nations as the International Year of Language. Mirima Language and Culture Centre is planning to hold an "Aboriginal Languages Fortnight" with a variety of activities and an interesting program. Kimberley Interpreting Service plans to participate with a workshop for potential users of Aboriginal Interpreters. This workshop aims to raise awareness among private enterprise and government departments, legal and medical institutions and tourism operators about the need and benefit to use qualified Aboriginal interpreters. ☺

## INTERPRETERS AND TOURISM

Halls Creek based NAATI interpreter Bonnie Edwards (Jaru, Kriol, English) is not only active in the courtroom but also comfortable with English tourists, Scottish hikers, German travellers, an Israeli ambassador with his two bodyguards and many more from all around the world.

During the Dry Season, Bonnie works as a guide conducting Aboriginal tours in the Purnululu National Park (Bungle Bungles) teaching about bush tucker, rock paintings, life on the land and dreamtime stories. Of course, she also talks about the stolen generation and the current situation of her people. She goes along with some of the traditional owners of Purnululu. They are fighting for native title on that land and they are keen to inform other people about the Aboriginal way of life, history, medicines and bush tucker. Bonnie likes to let them talk and tries only to contribute when they need an interpreter or if the questions are too difficult or delicate. She says: "It makes the people proud of their land to inform about it and so I really want to let *them* talk."

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*Bonnie tells from her experience last year: "The Israeli Ambassador with his two body guards came to our camp. He didn't know how us mob live and when he saw us on the ground with our swags he took photos and filmed with his video. He thought, wow! These people are really doing something....!"*

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"And then there was that German woman who asked for a cure for cancer. We gave it to her. We don't mind sharing our medicine with the white people. It doesn't matter if it is Aboriginal medicine. It is for all people, we are all one big family" explains Bonnie. "The German woman wanted us to send her more overseas, because the cure helped. Unfortunately, she ended up having a stroke and died anyway." "Yeah, it really is a great thing, I like doing it and seeing other people doing things with their life!"

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