

Intercultural collaboration on Aboriginal country

Will Smith¹, Timothy Neale¹, Jessica K. Weir², Adam Leavesley³, Rodney Carter⁴, Simone Blair⁵, Brian Cook⁶, Oliver Costello⁷, Simon Curry⁸, Mark Eccleston⁹, Rowan Foley¹⁰, Dean Freeman³, Owen Gooding¹¹, Tara K. McGee¹², David Nugent¹³, Jeremy Russell-Smith¹⁴, John Schauble¹⁵, Kate White¹⁶

¹Deakin University, ²Western Sydney University, ³Australian Capital Territory Parks and Conservation Service, ⁴Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, ⁵Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Victoria, ⁶University of Melbourne, ⁷Firesticks Initiative, ⁸New South Wales Rural Fire Service, ⁹Aboriginal Victoria, ¹⁰Aboriginal Carbon Fund, ¹¹Country Fire Authority, ¹²University of Alberta, ¹³Parks Victoria, ¹⁴Charles Darwin University, ¹⁵Emergency Management Victoria, ¹⁶State Emergency Service Victoria

KEY FACTS

1. Natural hazard management is inseparable from cultural values and norms.

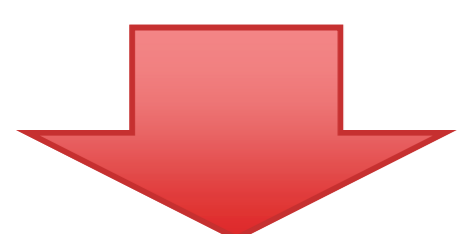
We all carry with us cultural values and assumptions about what we think is normal or optimal, including in relation to natural hazards and their management. However, these values and assumptions are often invisible to us.

2. Aboriginal peoples are increasingly engaged in natural hazard management.

Throughout Australia, Aboriginal peoples have often been excluded from natural hazards management on public and private lands. However, this is now changing in southern Australia. Increasing numbers of Aboriginal people are formally employed within natural hazards agencies and the recognition of Aboriginal peoples' land rights and rights to speak for country is expanding.

3. Intercultural collaborations will help reduce natural hazard risk.

Experiences of intercultural dialogue and collaboration are opportunities to reduce our exposure to natural hazard risks. Through these experiences, we can better uncover the values and assumptions that lie behind existing approaches, and thereby create new knowledge and relationships that will increase our individual and collective resilience.



OUR RESEARCH PROJECT

This innovative 3-year research project explores cultural difference and similarity to gain insights into natural hazard management policy and practice. Specifically, we are investigating the existing and emerging engagements between the natural hazards sector and diverse Aboriginal peoples across southern Australia. This is an intercultural project for an intercultural society.

Started July 2017, this research project aims to:

1. Investigate the hazard priorities of diverse Aboriginal communities in southern Australia, and the sector's engagement with these communities.
2. Conduct collaborative research with Aboriginal peoples and sector practitioners to explore how better engagement can be supported, with a focus on the interaction between scientific, Aboriginal and other knowledge sources
3. Analyse and report on what this dynamic intercultural context can offer practice and policy, including with respect to emerging risk and resilience agendas.



PHOTOS: (top and left) Djandak wi ('healthy fire') burn conducted at Yerrip by Dja Dja Wurrung peoples and DELWP (Neale, 2018; (bottom) Cultural burn in Canberra, Dean Freeman and Krystal Hurst (ACT Government, 2015)



METHODOLOGY & METHODS:

- **What we're using:** an applied research approach conducted in line with leading-practice ethical guidelines, including the principle of informed consent.
- **What we're doing:** two case study partnerships, practitioner survey, literature collection and review, analysis and synthesis with policy and practice recommendations.

PROJECT PROGRESS SO FAR:

- **Literature review:** Project team members have reviewed literature on collaborations and engagements between indigenous peoples and government natural hazards agencies in Canada, Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and the United States (or CANZUS countries). This review is available from the BNHCRC website.
- **Case studies:** Project team members have begun case studies examining collaborations between Aboriginal peoples and government agencies in Ngunnawal country (Canberra, ACT) and Dja Dja Wurrung country (Murray-Goldfields, Vic).

WHO ARE WE?

RESEARCH TEAM: **Dr Jessica K. Weir** has over 20 years experience working with Indigenous peoples on intercultural research projects about environmental issues. **Dr Timothy Neale** has wide-ranging experience working with the natural hazards sector and Indigenous peoples on projects examining knowledge practices. **Dr Will Smith** has several years experience working with Indigenous peoples on issues surrounding environment management internationally.

KEY UTILISATION PRODUCTS

- 'State of play' reporting
- Socio-institutional governance mapping
- Identification of factors for best practice
- Support of national and sub-national networks
- Co-learning with case study partners and other end users
- Co-production of knowledge through co-authored presentations and publications

IF YOU'D LIKE TO FIND OUT MORE: find us at the BNHCRC website ('Hazards, culture and Indigenous communities' project), on Twitter at @DrJKWeir or @tdneale, or via email at j.weir@westernsydney.edu.au, t.neale@deakin.edu.au or will.smith@deakin.edu.au