



cordially invites you to a seminar on
**Waving to the other side:
the language of poetry in indigenous Australian song**

by

Nicholas Evans

*ARC Centre of Excellence for the Dynamics of Language,
Australian National University*

ABSTRACT

Poetry and song are inextricably interwoven in most indigenous Australian traditions. And the poetic masterpieces found across the continent are little-known outside their immediate communities, tied up as they are with the intricacies of the languages they are sung in. As a result, Australia has little awareness of the many hundreds of Shakespeares, Keatses, and Bob Dylans whose poetic masterpieces are composed in First Nations languages. The same goes for the continent's rich and varied indigenous musical traditions. In this talk I will seek to give a glimpse into the richness of the poetic language found across a number of north Australian communities I have worked in, focussing on allusive subtlety, inner feeling, multilingual characterisation, and the deployment of vocabulary and grammar for expressive nuance, and the role of song in maintaining language knowledge through the powerful emotional charge it generates.

I take the title of my talk from some lines of a Mayali song by the late and great Djorli Laywanga, a Dalabon songman: Kurebe ngadjowkke ngawayudwayudme, marrek berlneyiii, marrek nuk berlneyiii. 'From the other side of the river I am waving, I couldn't see your arm waving back, Maybe I missed your arm waving'. I hope that the close readings of several poetic masterpieces that I will undertake during the lecture will help span what we see and hear across the river.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Nicholas (Nick) Evans, ARC Laureate Fellow and Distinguished Professor of Linguistics at the Australian National University, directs the ARC Centre of Excellence for the Dynamics of Language (CoEDL), of which Nanyang is a partner organisation. He has carried out wide-ranging fieldwork on indigenous languages of Australia and Papua New Guinea. The driving interest of his work is the interplay between documenting and describing the incredible diversity contained in the world's endangered languages and the many humanistic and scientific questions they can help us answer.

In addition to book-length grammars and dictionaries of several Aboriginal languages (Kayardild, Bininj Gun-wok, Dalabon) and edited collections on numerous linguistic topics, he has published over 170 scientific papers. His crossover book *Dying Words: Endangered Languages and What They Have to Tell Us*, which sets out a broad program for engaging with the world's dwindling linguistic diversity has been translated into French, Japanese, Korean and German, with a Chinese translation soon to appear. He has also worked as a linguist, interpreter and anthropologist in two Native Title claims, and as a promotor of Aboriginal art. Nick is a member of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, the Australian Social Sciences Academy, a corresponding member of the British Academy, and the recipient of the inaugural Anneliese Maier Forschungspreis from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation / German Ministry of Science and Education, and the Ken Hale Award from the Linguistics Society of America.



DATE:

Friday,

7 December, 2018

TIME:

3:00pm

VENUE:

HSS

Conference Room
(HSS-05-57)

ALL ARE WELCOME